



# MEXICO

## Best of Birding in the Yucatán

with Jayne Johnston

APRIL 20 – 30, 2023

Pack your binoculars and join Jayne Johnston for a birding adventure to the environmentally diverse Yucatán Peninsula. Witness native birds soar above the stunning ruins of Hochob, Becán, Chacchoben, Uxmal, and other archaeological sites on this journey through the Maya world. Amid the dense forests and ancient ruins, watch for a rainbow array of birds including hummingbirds, parrots, tanagers, flamingos, raptors, and more. From trail hikes to boat rides, birders will have an opportunity to participate in a variety of outdoor activities while learning about the history of the Maya and the birds that call the Yucatán home.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy exceptional birding while visiting the walled city of Becán, once a Maya political, economic, and religious center.
- Watch for target species like the Hook-billed and Gray-headed Kites, Hawk Eagle, and the magnificent King Vulture.
- Embark on a boat ride on Bacalar Lagoon, nicknamed the "Lake of Seven Colors."
- Search for avifauna in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, home to approximately 350 bird species.
- Go birding by boat through the Celestun marshes and mangroves, home to herons, cormorants, frigatebirds, and flamingos.



UXMAL BY MAURIZIO COSTANZO



OCCELLATED TURKEYS (ABOVE) & MEXICAN SHEARTAIL BY ALEXANDER DZIB





## ITINERARY

---

### DAY 1 | WED | 20 APR | COZUMEL

Arrive at the Cozumel International Airport on the island of Cozumel, Mexico. After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met and transferred to the hotel. Attend an orientation meeting and have dinner at the hotel.

**HOTEL VILLA BLANCA**

### DAY 2 | THU | 21 APR | COZUMEL

After breakfast, transfer to San Gervasio, a Maya site on the north side of the island that was once the administrative seat for the entire island. San Gervasio is a pre-Columbian name meaning "flat rock in the place of the swallows;" within the forest here, watch for Yucatan Vireo, Cozumel Vireo, Yucatan Woodpecker, Cozumel Emerald, Green-breasted Mango, Caribbean Dove, Cozumel Wren, and Black Catbird. Eat lunch at a local restaurant. Spend the rest of the afternoon exploring and birding the southern end of the island. Return to the hotel with time to freshen up before a presentation on "The Birds of Cozumel," followed by dinner.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**

**HOTEL VILLA BLANCA**

### DAY 3 | FRI | 22 APR | CHETUMAL

Start the day birding the hotel gardens, and after breakfast, take the ferry to Playa del Carmen on the mainland. Continue south through Sian Ka'an, a Biosphere Reserve and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Situated along the coast, this reserve is a mix of tropical forest, savanna, and mangrove with an impressive bird list numbering over 300 species. Potential sightings here include Scaled Pigeon, Yucatan (Yellow-lored) Parrot, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing, Yucatan (Ridgway's) Rough-winged Swallow,

Gray-throated Chat, Orange Oriole, and Rose-throated Tanager. Also look for wildlife such as howler and spider monkeys, tapirs, crocodiles, margays, and ocelots. Have lunch in the nearby town of Felipe Carrillo Puerto. In the afternoon, bird the temples and surrounding forest of Chacchoben and watch for Red-lored Parrot, Brown Jay, Spot-breasted Wren, Black-headed Trogon, and Red-throated Ant-Tanager, among others. Continue to your hotel for check-in and dinner.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**

**MAYAN SECRET HOTEL BOUTIQUE**

### DAY 4 | SAT | 23 APR | CHETUMAL

After breakfast, transfer to Noh-Bec, a community owned tropical reserve located around the Noh Bec lagoon. Some target species here include Brown-hooded Parrot, White-crowned Parrot, Lineated Woodpecker, Plain Chachalaca, Purple Gallinule, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Royal Flycatcher, Green Kingfisher, Greenish Elaenia, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Collared Trogon, Black-headed Trogon, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, and Blue Ground-Dove. Have lunch in a local restaurant and then take a boat ride around Bacalar Lagoon—known as the "Lake of Seven Colors" due to its different shades of blue. During the ride, you may see Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Neotropic Cormorant, Limpkin, Northern Jacana, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, and White-fronted Parrot. Return to the pier and visit the colonial Fort of San Felipe for more birding. Have lunch at a local restaurant, then return to the hotel for time at leisure to relax or watch for avian visitors in the hotel gardens. This evening, attend a lecture on birding in the Yucatán before dinner at the hotel.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**

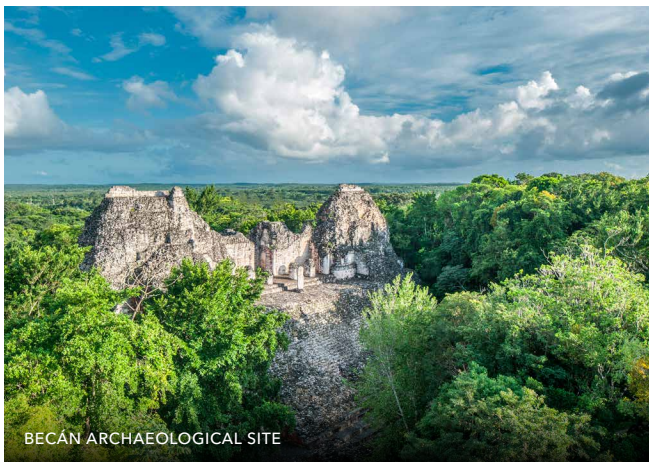
**MAYAN SECRET HOTEL BOUTIQUE**



## DAY 5 | SUN | 24 APR | XPUJIL

Check out after breakfast and head further inland toward Xpujil, stopping for birding en route at Caobas and Tres Garantías, a beautiful forest near the border of Belize and Guatemala. Some target species here include Brown-hooded Parrot, White-crowned Parrot, Lineated Woodpecker, Plain Chachalaca, Purple Gallinule, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Royal Flycatcher, Green Kingfisher, Greenish Elaenia, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Stub-tailed Spadebill, Collared Trogon, Black-headed Trogon, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, and Blue Ground-Dove. Continue to Xpujil for lunch and then transfer about four miles west to Becán for a field trip in the ruins. This site was once the political, economic, and religious center of the area known today as Rio Bec. One distinguishing characteristic of Becán is the presence of moats and protective walls surrounding the city, features not commonly found in Maya architecture. The pyramids and temples in Becán were built in clusters around three main plazas and also include a small but well-preserved ball court. Some buildings still have remnants of the detailed facades that once graced their walls, giving insight into what the city must have looked like at its peak. A variety of warblers, tanagers, hummingbirds, and raptors can be seen here. Check in at the hotel this afternoon, with time for birding around the hotel's gardens. Keep your eyes open for Crested Guan, Great Curassow, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, and Thicket Tinamou.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**  
**CHICANNA ECOVILLAGE RESORT**



## DAY 6 | MON | 25 APR | XPUJIL

Rise early with a boxed breakfast for a field trip to Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. Calakmul is within the largest contiguous tract of tropical forest outside the Amazon Basin—Mesoamerica's 35-million-acre Mayan Forest—and provides refuge for many rare and endangered species. The Maya ruins here feel like the set of an Indiana Jones movie, half-buried in a thick tangle of jungle with massive pyramids towering above the canopy. From these ancient vantage points, look for soaring raptors, such as the magnificent King Vulture, the symbol for Calakmul. The roads in and out offer a good chance for large gamebirds such as Ocellated Turkey, Crested Guan, and Great Curassow—all relatively common here. Possibilities along forested trails include Thicket Tinamou, Gartered Trogon, Collared Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-faced Anthrush, various woodcreepers, Northern

Bentbill, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Bright-rumped Attila, Green Jay, White-bellied Wren, and many neotropical migrants during the winter months. Have a picnic lunch on site before returning to the hotel for more birding in the nearby gardens. Dinner at the hotel.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**  
**CHICANNA ECOVILLAGE RESORT**



## DAY 7 | TUE | 26 APR | UXMAL

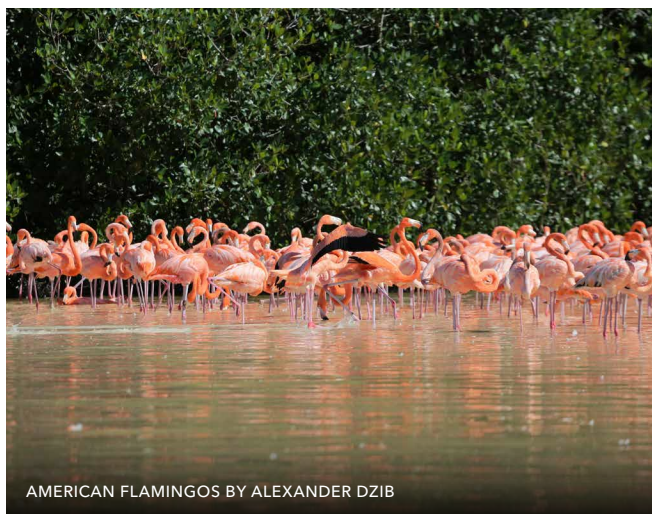
After early morning birding, breakfast and check-out, proceed to the small but interesting Maya ruins at Hochob. Hochob is an excellent example of the Chenes architectural style, which flourished from about AD 100 to 1000 and is distinguished by smaller courtyards and ceremonial platforms and a lack of large pyramids. Birding the drier woodland in and around Hochob may produce Yucatan Bobwhite, Lesser Roadrunner, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Yucatan Woodpecker, Turquoise-browed Motmot, and Fork-tailed Flycatcher. Enjoy a picnic lunch on site and then continue the drive north to Uxmal. Arrive at the hotel with time for birding the grounds before dinner.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**  
**HOTEL MAYA UXMAL**

## DAY 8 | WED | 27 APR | UXMAL

Morning visit to Uxmal. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of the most impressive and important Maya archaeological sites in the Yucatan. Typical of the Puuc style, the buildings are low horizontal structures with courtyards that are richly decorated with detailed sculptures made from thousands of perfectly polished stones. The ruins are clustered into 15 groups that spread north to south, and highlights include the Pyramid of the Magician with its Plaza of the Birds, the Ball Court, the Governor's Palace, and the Great Pyramid. After lunch, visit the Uxmal Puuc area to meet with a Maya community that harvests and processes cacao fruit. (Participants are welcome and invited to participate in the activities.) Visit the chocolate museum, with the chance to purchase some chocolate and support the farm's mission of having a sustainable activity for local Maya families.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**  
**HOTEL MAYA UXMAL**



AMERICAN FLAMINGOS BY ALEXANDER DZIB

## DAY 9 | THU | 28 APR | HUNUCMA

Begin the day with early morning birding, then have breakfast and check out. Depart for Hunucma, with a roadside stop for birding in the Chunchucmil community, where you may see Lesser Roadrunner, Russet-naped Wood-Rail, Northern Jacana, Squirrel Cuckoo, Caribbean Dove, and Blue-black Grassquit, among others. Upon arrival, have lunch and check in at your hotel. There will be a chance to seek out some species that are endemic to the north coast, such as Yucatan Jay and Mexican Shearwater, as well as other species like Yucatan Bobwhite, Yucatan Woodpecker, Black Catbird, White-lored Gnatcatcher, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Mangrove Warbler, and Common Tody-Flycatcher. Next, listen to a lecture on local flamingo conservation efforts run by the Yucatán Government.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**

**HOTEL SIHUNCHEN-ALDEA MAYA**

## DAY 10 | FRI | 29 APR | MÉRIDA

Early morning birding. After breakfast, take a boat ride down the Rio Celestún. Targets today include flamingos, the elusive Rufous-necked Wood-Rail, Lesson's Motmot, Common Black Hawk, Yellow-tailed Oriole, Boat-billed Heron, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, and others. After lunch in town, transfer to Mérida and check in at the hotel. Enjoy a farewell dinner this evening.

**BREAKFAST-LUNCH-DINNER**

**HOTEL CASA BALAM**

## DAY 11 | SAT | 30 APR | DEPART

After breakfast transfer to the Mérida International Airport for return flights home.

## PRICING DETAILS

---

**From \$2,825**

Price includes:

- Accommodations and meals as described
- Sightseeing and activities as described, including entrance fees
- Private vehicle transportation and driver
- Full-time guide for duration of the program
- Non-alcoholic beverages with meals
- Departure tax
- Carbon offset

Price does not include: international airfare, travel/trip cancellation insurance, tips/gratuities, drinks purchased on own, items of a personal nature.

## THE FINE PRINT

---

Cost is based on a minimum of 8 participants in double occupancy.

A \$500 per person deposit and enrollment form is due to hold your space on this trip. This deposit is refundable until 95 days prior to departure excluding a \$300 cancellation fee. Cancellations after this date will result in loss of full deposit.

Please note: Your participation as a traveler indicates acceptance of Holbrook Travel's Covid-19 protocols in place at time of travel.

Holbrook Travel strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance for medical emergencies while traveling and to protect your investment. Please note the purchase of Cancel for Any Reason Coverage or to exclude pre-existing conditions with Trip Cancellation coverage may require policy purchase within 10-14 days of your initial deposit, depending upon the provider.

**Single room supplement: \$620**

**Final payment due date:** January 15, 2023



*This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at [holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe](https://holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe)*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO ENROLL:**

SANDY SCHMIDT | [schmidt@holbrooktravel.com](mailto:schmidt@holbrooktravel.com) | 877-907-5360 | [holbrook.travel/johnston-mx23](https://holbrook.travel/johnston-mx23)