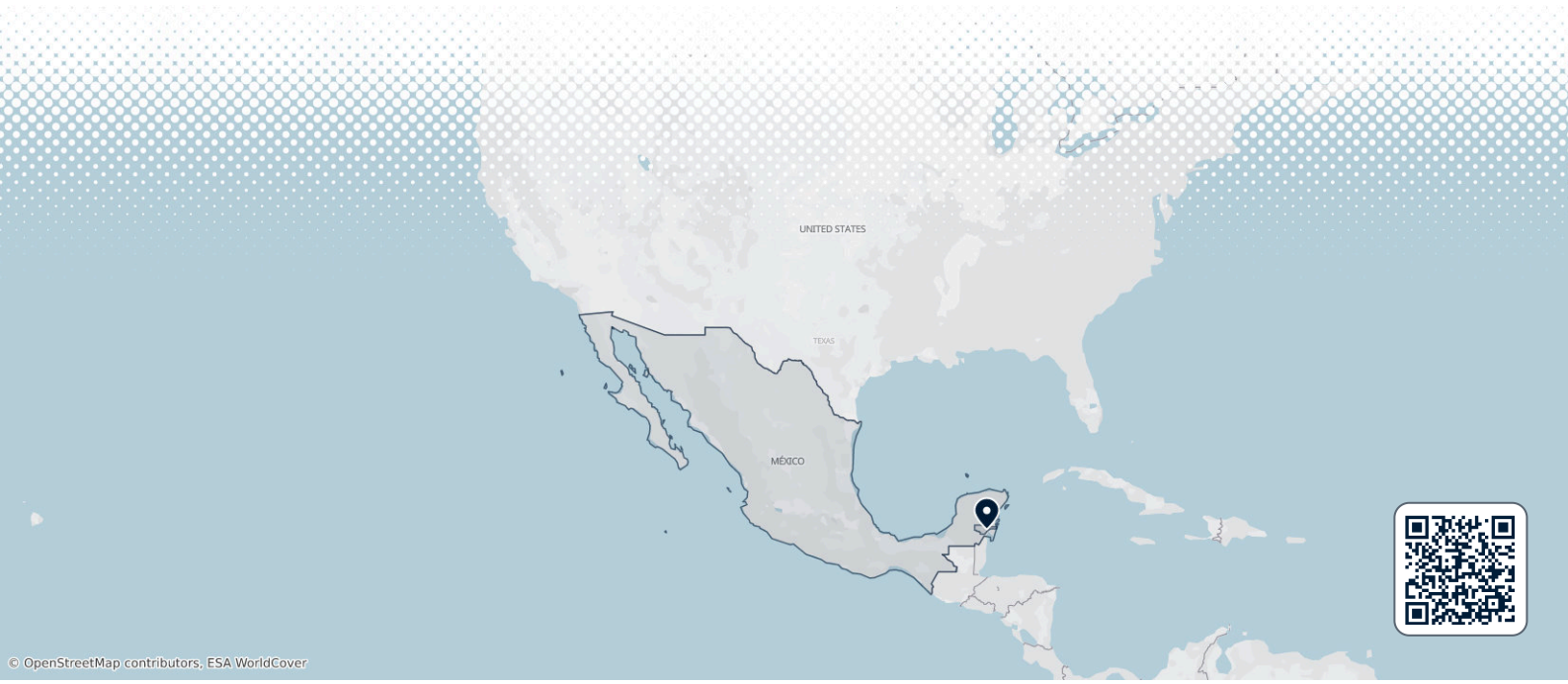


Bacalar Municipality

Quintana Roo · Mexico

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Bacalar is a small town on the shore of Laguna Bacalar, a long freshwater lagoon in the south of Quintana Roo. The water shows many shades of blue over white sand, which gives it the nickname "Lake of Seven Colours". The town has a 18th-century fort, a quiet waterfront and many small lakeside hotels.

It suits two to three relaxed nights. People come to swim, kayak, sail and visit cenotes and Maya sites in the area.

When to visit

November to April is dry and the lake is calm and clear. May to October is hot and humid, with heavy rain and some storms. Hurricane season runs from about June to November.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for watersports	28° / 30°	21° / 17°	Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
February	Great Great for watersports	29° / 32°	22° / 18°	Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
March	Great Great for watersports	31° / 34°	23° / 20°	Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
April	Great Great for watersports	32° / 35°	25° / 22°	Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 10 (Very high)
May	Great Great for watersports	32° / 35° Feels like 36°	26° / 24°	Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
June	Fair Fair for watersports	31° / 34° Feels like 35°	26° / 24°	19 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
July	Fair Fair for watersports	30° / 33° Feels like 35°	26° / 25°	19 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Fair Fair for watersports	31° / 33° Feels like 35°	26° / 25°	21 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
September	Poor Poor for watersports	30° / 33° Feels like 35°	26° / 25°	22 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
October	Fair Fair for watersports	29° / 31° Feels like 33°	25° / 21°	20 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds
November	Good Good for watersports	28° / 30° Feels like 31°	23° / 19°	15 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds
December	Good Good for watersports	28° / 30°	22° / 18°	14 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2); NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Lago Bacalar is the main attraction, with clear water, sandbars and stromatolites, rocks formed by ancient microbes. Do not step on these.
- B Fuerte de San Felipe is a fort built in the 18th century to defend the town against pirates. It has a small museum.
- Canal de los Piratas is a channel from the lake with shallow water, popular for swimming and boat trips.
- Cenote Azul and Emerald Cenote are deep cenotes on the south end of the lake.
- C Zona arqueológica de Chacchoben is a Maya site in a forest, with a quiet atmosphere.
- D Zona arqueológica de Dzibanché is a larger Maya site with tall temples, inland from the lake.



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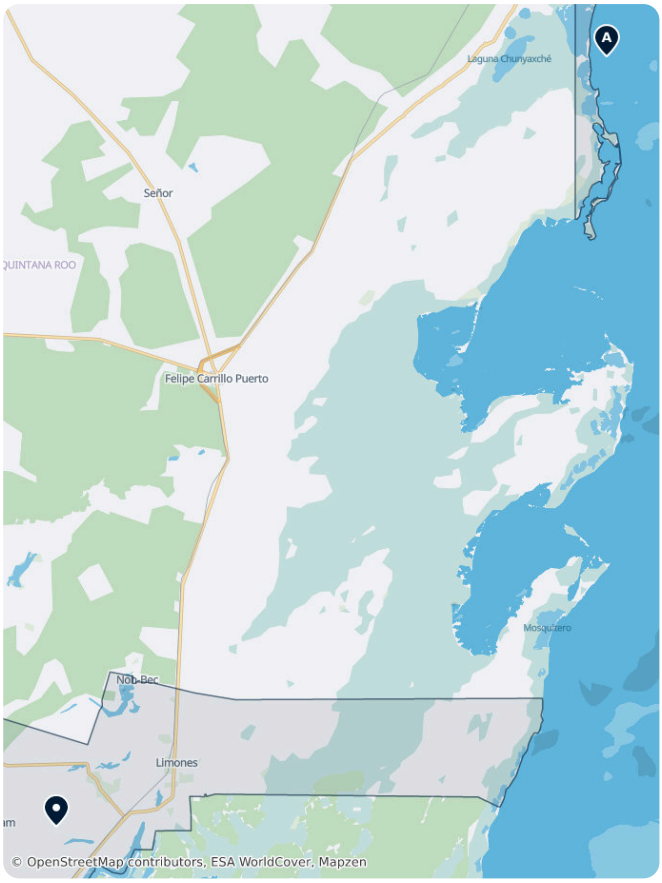
What to experience

- Take a sailing trip to the sandbars and channels.
- Swim or paddle in the early morning, when the lake is calm.
- Visit Cenote Azul, a deep cenote at the edge of the lake.
- Take a day trip to the Maya ruins of Dzibanché.

Day trips

- Zona arqueológica de Chacchoben: about 1 hour by car. Maya ruins in the forest.
- Zona arqueológica de Dzibanché: about 1 hour by car. Large temples and few visitors.
- A Tulum: about 2.5 hours by car. Ruins on a cliff and beaches.



Where to explore

- Tulum for beaches, ruins and cenotes.
- Playa del Carmen for the coast to the north.

Getting there

- **By air**: The nearest large airport is Cancún (CUN), about 3.5 hours by road. Chetumal (CTM) is about 40 minutes away.
- **By bus**: ADO buses stop in Bacalar on the Cancún to Chetumal route. Colectivo vans also run along the highway.
- **By road**: Highway 307 passes close to the town.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The town centre and lakefront are compact.
- **Taxi and bike**: Taxis reach hotels and cenotes along the shore. Bikes are good for the flat lakeside road.
- **Boat**: Boat trips and kayaks are the best way to see the lake.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The village centre and lakefront are walkable. Lake sights and cenotes are spread along the shore.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

The lakeside road is flat, but there is little shade.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Useful for Maya sites and remote cenotes. Not needed for the town and lakefront.
- **Roads**: Highway 307 is in good condition. Speed bumps (topes) are common near villages.
- **Parking**: Hotels have parking. Street parking is easy in the village.

Food & drink

Local food includes Yucatecan dishes, fresh fish and seafood. Many lakeside restaurants and cafes serve regional and international food. Small family places in the town centre are cheaper.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Cochinita Pibil
Slow-roasted, citrus- and achiote-marinated pork, a Yucatán specialty traditionally cooked in an underground pit.

DINNER

Mole
A complex sauce, often built from chiles, spices, and sometimes chocolate; mole poblano and Oaxaca's several moles are the best known versions.

Chiles en Nogada
A Puebla dish of stuffed poblano chiles topped with a walnut cream sauce and pomegranate seeds, in the colors of the Mexican flag.

Pozole
A hominy stew with pork or chicken, topped with shredded cabbage, radish, and chile, traditionally eaten on special occasions.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Tacos
Corn or flour tortillas filled with meat, fish, or vegetables, with endless regional and stall-to-stall variation.

Tamales
Corn dough filled with meat, cheese, or vegetables, wrapped in a corn husk or banana leaf and steamed.

Elote/Esquites · Elote / Esquites
Grilled or boiled corn on the cob (elote) or served off the cob in a cup (esquites), topped with mayonnaise, cheese, chile, and lime.

DRINKS

Mezcal
A smoky agave spirit from Oaxaca and several other states, distinct from tequila, traditionally sipped neat.

Tequila
An agave spirit from the region around the town of Tequila in Jalisco, Mexico's best-known export spirit.

Horchata
A sweet, cinnamon-spiced rice-based drink, popular as a non-alcoholic accompaniment to spicy food.

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Safety & health

The town is generally safe. Take usual care with bags and phones at night.

- The lake is a fragile environment. Use biodegradable sunscreen or none at all.
- Do not walk on the stromatolites.
- The sun is strong. Drink water and use sun protection.
- Drink purified or bottled water.

History

Bacalar was a Maya settlement. The Spanish built the Fuerte de San Felipe in the 1730s to defend the town against pirates who raided the area from the lagoon. The fort later played a role in the Caste War of the 19th century.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Mexico at a glance:

CURRENCY
MXN $

EMERGENCY
911

ELECTRICITY



Type A / Type B
127 V · 60 Hz

LANGUAGES
Spanish

TAP WATER
Not safe to drink

Bacalar Essentials

Known for its 'Lagoon of Seven Colors,' Bacalar features a 42-kilometer-long freshwater system shaped by varying depths and white limestone soil. The area is home to rare stromatolites—prehistoric microbial reefs—and historic sites like the 18th-century San Felipe Fortress, built to defend against Caribbean pirates. Beyond the lagoon, the landscape is defined by deep cenotes such as Cenote Azul and the nearby Mayan archaeological sites of Chacchoben and Dzibanché, which showcase Petén-style pyramids and ancient jungle ruins dating back to 200 BC.





A Bacalar Lagoon

Also called Lake of the Seven Colors, the second largest lake of Mexico is simply spectacular. Join a cruise or explore the cenotes nearby.

Mexico (18.71515, -88.35542)

B Cenote Cocalitos

A sanctuary for stromatolites, prehistoric microbial reefs that are among the oldest life forms on Earth. The area features shallow turquoise waters and a protected ecosystem.

(18.64999, -88.41019)



C Canal de los Piratas

Historic waterway connecting the lagoon to the Hondo River, used by 18th-century pirates to access the town. It is characterized by mineral-rich mud and a shallow, sandy bottom.

Mexico (18.67048, -88.37654)



D Fortress

Bacalar is the municipal seat and largest city in Bacalar Municipality in the Mexican state of Quintana Roo, about 40 kilometres north of...

1, Centro, 77930 Bacalar, Quintana Roo, Mexico (18.67708, -88.38850)

Mo–Su 08:00–17:00



E Zona arqueológica de Chacchoben

Chacchoben is a Maya ruin approximately 110 mi south of Tulum and 7 mi from the village from which it derives its name.

Mexico (19.00160, -88.23198)



F Cenote Black

An open-air cenote within the lagoon known for its dramatic underwater cliff, where the depth drops abruptly from 2 meters to 90 meters, turning the water from turquoise to dark blue.

Bacalar, Mexico (18.66693, -88.39428)

G Emerald Cenote

A deep, open-air cenote located directly inside the lagoon. It reaches depths of approximately 70 meters and serves as one of the primary water sources for the lagoon system.

Boulevard Costero, 77933 Bacalar, ROO, Mexico (18.65567, -88.40515)



H Zona arqueológica de Dzibanché

Dzibanche is an archaeological site of the ancient Maya civilization located in southern Quintana Roo, in the Yucatan Peninsula of...

Mexico (18.63986, -88.75908)

I Cenote Azul

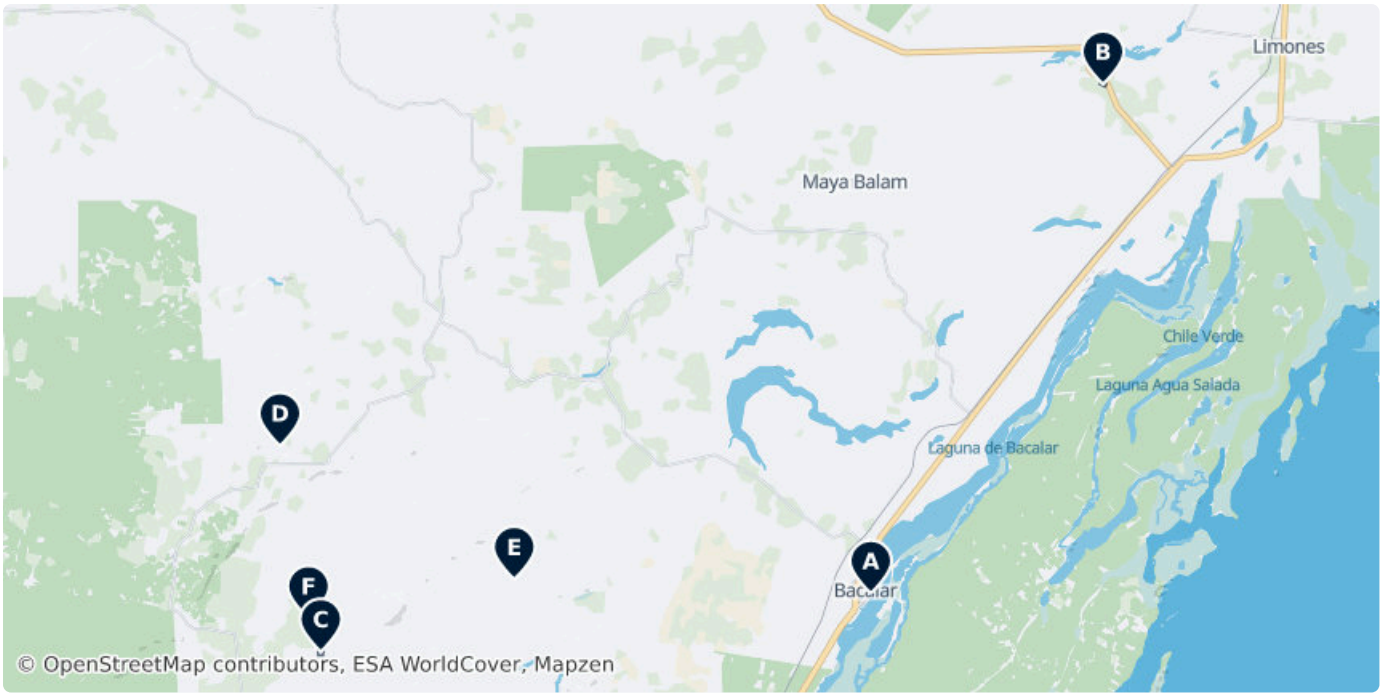
A 90-meter-deep cenote located on the edge of the lagoon. It is physically separated from the main body of water and is surrounded by dense tropical vegetation.

Avenida 1, Bacalar 77933, Mexico (18.64701, -88.41298)

Mo–Su	10:00–17:30

Historical Sites near Bacalar

This collection highlights the defensive and ceremonial history of southern Quintana Roo. It features the 18th-century Fuerte de San Felipe, built to protect Bacalar from pirate raids, alongside significant Maya archaeological zones. Sites like Chacchoben and the expansive Ichkabal showcase Preclassic and Classic period architecture, while Dzibanché and Kinichná offer insight into the Kaanul dynasty's power. These sites are characterized by massive stepped pyramids, intricate stucco friezes, and dense jungle surroundings.





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Mexico (18.63986, -88.75908)

D El Resbalón

Maya archaeological site located in the village of San Román. It features remains from the Classic period, including a notable hieroglyphic stairway and several structures currently undergoing excavation.

Mexico (18.77117, -88.78665)

E Ichkabal

Ichkabal is a large ancient Maya city located in the jungle of Quintana Roo in Mexico dating from the Middle Preclassic period of the Maya...

Mexico (18.68591, -88.62873)

F Zona arqueológica de Kinichná

A little difficult to find but totally worth it if you're into ruins. Almost abandoned, still entangled with mysterious atmosphere.

Mexico (18.66088, -88.76736)

DATA SOURCES

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