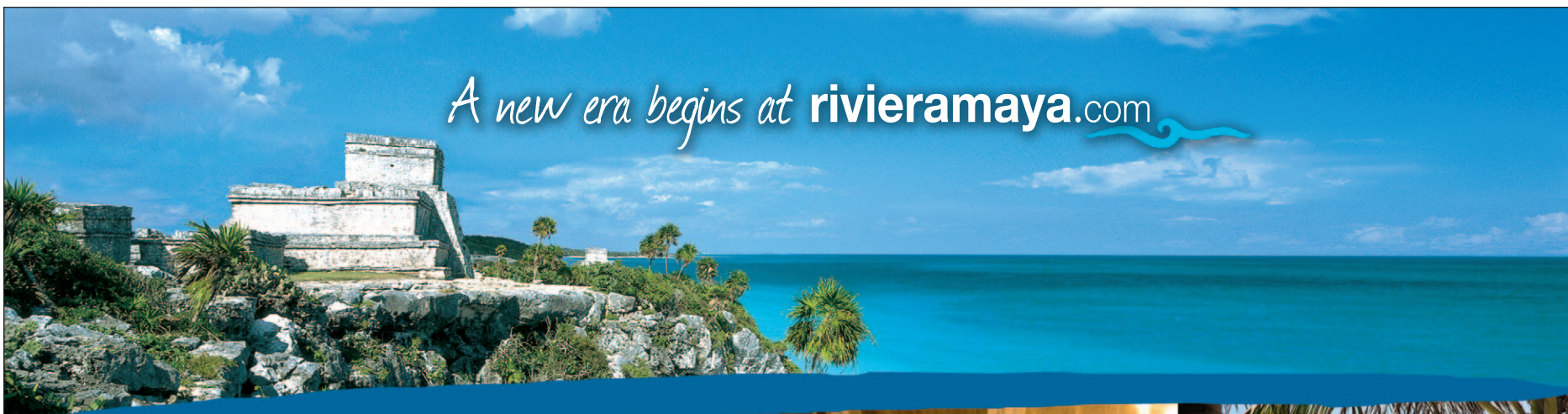


# PANORAMA

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## Quintana Roo: The U.S.'s favorite getaway

High quality Caribbean resorts and a forward-thinking governor keep the visitors coming.

**W**ith Caribbean coastlines, breathtaking nature that includes a coral reef, and lively, sophisticated tourism centers, Quintana Roo is Mexico's youngest and most visited state. Boasting more than 80,000 hotel rooms, and around 15 million visitors a year, Quintana Roo covers an area of 42,030 square kilometers (16,228 square miles) — a little less than half the size of Maine.

Situated on the Yucatán Peninsula, on the north-eastern side of Mexico, Quintana Roo is enjoying a flurry of important new developments which, when complete, will make the country's premier tourism destination even more appealing.

President Felipe Calderón declared 2011 "The Year of Tourism in Mexico" and confirmed he has the commitment of the private sector to push development in an industry, which already generates some 6 million jobs and more than \$36 million in annual revenues.

Quintana Roo's Governor Roberto Borge Angulo, who at 31 years old was the youngest governor to be elected in the country — he took office in April this year — represents a new generation of professionals that are interested in politics and public service.

As part of his mission to build a strong Quintana Roo, he is targeting health, justice, government, citizens' rights, and security and working in close proximity to the public.

He is keen to protect Quintana Roo's special environment, under the Green Quintana Roo theme. "More than a third of our state territory is a natural park or a protected area, and we have 888 kilometers of coastline," he says. "We are protecting diverse eco-systems and are also nurturing growth in renewable energies."

Borge Angulo, who will enjoy a non-renewable six-year term, is also keen to get the people of Quintana Roo working together, particularly inhabitants of indigenous communities living in the metropolitan areas, in the areas of agrobusiness, ranching, forestry, fishing, commerce and tourism. Competitiveness is a favorite watchword. "We have 1,342,000 inhabitants, but a floating



**"We have 1,342,000 inhabitants, and 15 million tourists. We shouldn't therefore compromise on quality."**

**Roberto Borge Angulo**  
Governor of Quintana Roo

population of 15 million tourists. We shouldn't therefore compromise on quality," he says.

### Protecting the state jewels

Under Borge Angulo's watch are five trusteeships, representing the tourist regions of Cancún, Riviera Maya, Isla Mujeres, Isla Cozumel and Costa Maya.

"Today, we are the number one destination in Latin America for tourism, but we are also looking for strategies that will allow us to attract investment for manufacturing and productions, so that we can capitalize on our tourism revenues and also have economic activity that will allow us to grow the manufacturing sector. We have a lot of resources here and I am convinced that with the right investment, Quintana Roo will be much more economically active."

Currently 80% of the state's economic activity is derived from direct and indirect tourism and the state represents 50% of total tourism taxes given to the State. The state already has three international airports, at Cancún, Cozumel and Chetumal, with 12 million tourists arriving by plane and 3.2 million by cruise ship.

Among the many new developments taking place, Puerto Cancún will arguably have the greatest impact on the economy. A stunning resort situated on the last stretch of undeveloped beach in Cancún's famous hotel zone, Puerto Cancún will feature attractions such as a mega-yacht marina, a Tom Weiskopf-designed



**History and beauty go hand-in-hand in Quintana Roo.**

golf course, five-star resorts, condominiums, a resort village and commercial areas, a business park, single family home sites and estate home sites.

The 800-acre development also boasts a conservation area that spans more than 270 acres, supporting various types of wildlife and 100 different species of plants.

As Jesús Almaguer Salazar, director general and CEO of the Cancún Convention and Visitors Bureau points out, Cancún has been the preferred international tourism destination for U.S. citizens since 2008, with Expedia, Orbitz, and Travelocity customers voting it first after Las Vegas, Orlando, and New York.

"Cancún is now one of the most well-known Mexican brands in the world," he says. "We are working to position Cancún as a place that offers a variety of experiences — that is what people want now."

The tourism chief and his team launched the "Cancún and the Treasures of the Caribbean" marketing campaign last year, aimed at positioning Cancún as a grand, diverse destination that integrates fashion, adventure, ecological

tours, gastronomy and much more. Within the relaunch, Cancún has been joined by islands such as Holbox, Isla Mujeres, Cozumel, Contoy and the fishing village of Puerto Morelos.

Cancún's "Hotel Zone" has also undergone a \$71 million makeover this year. The investment in both the rebranding and the renovation seems to have paid off. At this year's World Travel Awards, Cancún was named "Mexico and Central America's Leading Destination" and "Mexico and Central America's Leading Beach Destination."

The state also boasts the Cancún Underwater Art Museum, which displays fascinating sculptures by one of the country's most inspired artists.

With an estimated 750,000 visitors a year, the underwater museum currently exhibits more than 400 sculptures, forming the world's largest underwater museum. The sculptures were sunk in two phases, but it is only now that local marine life is beginning to manifest its curiosity.

The underwater museum was created to facilitate the preservation of natural coral reefs, by directing tourists to the exhibition. Jason deCaires Taylor, the museum's artistic director,

wanted to portray the circle of life, and each of the sculptures represents real-life personalities "filled with longing, suffering and dreams, just like humanity."

### Riviera Maya celebrates diversity

Breathtaking attractions can also be seen in the Riviera Maya area of Quintana Roo. With its Caribbean beaches and Río Secreto—a 25-meter-deep underground cave that was discovered just four years ago—the semi-tropical region is enjoying its relatively recent arrival on Mexico's tourism scene.

As Dario Flota Ocampo, executive director of the Riviera Maya Tourist Board, explains: "Riviera Maya rose up in its own right in 1995: before that, it was just another part of the Cancún to Tulum corridor.

"In those days, it had just 1,500 hotel rooms, while today it has more than 38,500. During this growth spurt, we had between 3,000 and 5,000 new rooms being built every year in order to satisfy demand.

"The crisis in 2009 halted investment, but this November has seen a new hotel open, the

Sol Meliá, which has 954 rooms. There is also the Mayakoba Complex, built by the Spanish El Grupo Obrascón Huarte Lain (OHL) that will offer six luxury hotels and three golf courses. There are many important chains coming here, such as the Park Hyatt, St. Regis.

"Riviera Maya is known for its diversity, and among the large hotels, you will also find smaller hotels of 20 and 30 rooms."

As well as beaches and golf, Riviera Maya is home to the world's second-largest coral reef, clearwater lagoons and ecological reserves. For culture vultures, the ancient city of Tulum is a must-see.

Combining the mystery of the ancient civilization that inhabited this zone with the unique beauty of the Caribbean Sea, Tulum is the only known archaeological site by the sea.

With more than 60 well-preserved structures and a small beach beside the main temple, the area is perfect for those looking for peace and tranquility; its special hotel zone, with cabanas dotted along the front, is particularly charming.

Meanwhile, Presidente InterContinental offers two beautiful resorts in the area, at Cozumel



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**Jesús Almaguer Salazar**  
Director General and CEO, Cancún  
Convention and Visitors Bureau



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**Dario Flota Ocampo**  
Executive Director  
Riviera Maya Tourist Board

and Cancún. As well as the excellent service and comfort associated with this prestigious brand, guests can expect activities that take full advantage of the natural attractions in the area.

Golf, diving and snorkeling, white sandy beaches and warm Caribbean waters come as standard — the Cozumel Resort and Spa is lucky enough to have the Chankanaab coral reef in front of its doors. A paradise for leisure travelers, both hotels offer excellent business and event facilities, and exquisite local food.

For all resorts, the proximity to Florida, and especially Miami, is a strong competitive advantage.

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For more information: [www.cancun.travel](http://www.cancun.travel)



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