

3 Days in Playa del Carmen for First Timers

Meta title: 3-Day Playa del Carmen Itinerary for First Timers: Must-Do Activities

Meta description: Enjoy three days with this Playa del Carmen itinerary for first-time visitors, including Maya ruins and other must-do's around the Riviera Maya.

Bio: Curated by Kate Loweth, a writer who is always ready to jet off to somewhere warm.

1st-person intro

The first time I stayed in [\[Playa del Carmen\]](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen/d5501), I planned to spend all my time enjoying the white-sand beaches. Return visits have let me branch out to take in the gorgeous [\[cenotes\]](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-attractions/Cenote-Chaak-Tun/d5501-a19739) and learn about the area's cultural history with visits to archaeological sites, such as the Maya ruins of [\[Coba \(Zona Arqueológica de Cobá\)\]](https://www.viator.com/Tulum-attractions/Mayan-Ruins-of-Coba-Zona-Arqueologica-de-Coba/d23012-a12702) and [\[Tulum\]](https://www.viator.com/Tulum/d23012).

With three days in Playa del Carmen, you'll have plenty of time for water adventures and day trips to [\[Akumal\]](https://www.viator.com/Cozumel-attractions/Akumal/d632-a14012) or [\[Isla Mujeres\]](https://www.viator.com/Cancun-attractions/Isla-Mujeres/d631-a1004). If shopping is on your list, [\[Fifth Avenue \(Quinta Avenida\)\]](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-attractions/Fifth-Avenue-Quinta-Avenida/d5501-a15019) is the place to go—you'll find plenty of souvenirs to remember your time in the [\[Riviera Maya and the Yucatan\]](https://www.viator.com/Riviera-Maya-and-the-Yucatan/d770). Here's your 3-day Playa del Carmen itinerary for first timers.

Weather tip

You'll find hot and muggy weather year-round in Playa del Carmen, with the summers being particularly oppressive.

One thing tip

If you only have time for one thing, make it a dip in a cenote.

Day 1

Playa del Carmen's proximity to so many Maya sites makes it easy to visit at least one during your stay. Whether you head off to [\[Chichen Itza\]](https://www.viator.com/Cancun-attractions/Chichen-Itza/d631-a78) or Tulum this morning, booking a guided tour is the way to go. Most include hotel pickup and drop-off (so you can avoid renting a car at the [\[Cancun\]](https://www.viator.com/Cancun/d631) airport).

<https://www.viator.com/tours/Playa-del-Carmen/Chichen-Itza-Ruins-and-Pyramids/d5501-6200P10>

There are so many fascinating animals to discover in [[Quintana Roo](https://www.viator.com/Riviera-Maya-and-the-Yucatan-attractions/Quintana-Roo/d770-a14480)](https://www.viator.com/Riviera-Maya-and-the-Yucatan-attractions/Quintana-Roo/d770-a14480). This afternoon, learn about some of them at the Akumal Monkey Sanctuary, where monkeys and other animals that were previously used in shows are rehabilitated.

<https://www.viator.com/tours/Playa-del-Carmen/Akumal-Monkey-Sanctuary/d5501-15574P8>

Day 2

On day two, explore Playa del Carmen's food scene. A stop at the mercado will show you what's in season, and you can try some *agua fresca* while you're there. Then head to a taqueria for street tacos before you enjoy a mango or tamarind popsicle at a *paleteria*. A [[food tour](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/Food-Tours/d5501-g6-c80)](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/Food-Tours/d5501-g6-c80) is the best way to find under-the-radar hot spots.

<https://www.viator.com/tours/Playa-del-Carmen/Local-Walking-Food-Tour/d5501-63355P1>

After you've fueled up for the day, it's time for some adventure. Playa del Carmen has plenty of options if you have a need for speed, from [[all-terrain vehicle \(ATV\) tours](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/ATV-Tour/d5501-tag21421)](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/ATV-Tour/d5501-tag21421) to [[ziplining](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/Ziplines/d5501-g9-c5323)](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/Ziplines/d5501-g9-c5323). Many include pickup from **hotels in Playa del Carmen**. Just be sure you hold on tight!

<https://www.viator.com/tours/Playa-del-Carmen/Buggy-Tour-in-Playa-del-Carmen-with-Cenote-Swim-and-Mayan-Village-Visit/d5501-20985P1>

Day 3

Getting out on the water is one of the top must-do activities in this part of [[Mexico](https://www.viator.com/Mexico/d76)](https://www.viator.com/Mexico/d76). Today, choose a [[snorkeling adventure](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/Snorkeling/d5501-g17-c58)](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/Snorkeling/d5501-g17-c58) or a [[catamaran cruise](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/Catamaran-Cruises/d5501-g3-c32016)](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-tours/Catamaran-Cruises/d5501-g3-c32016); you'll see this region of the **Caribbean Sea** and maybe even spot some sea turtles swimming by.

<https://www.viator.com/tours/Playa-del-Carmen/Beautiful-48-ft-Yacht-Private-Charter/d5501-268612P1>

Later, take a break from the heat, spending your afternoon exploring the area's hidden caves, or cenotes. At [[Rio Secreto Nature Reserve](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-attractions/Rio-Secreto-Nature-Reserve/d5501-a14429)](https://www.viator.com/Playa-del-Carmen-attractions/Rio-Secreto-Nature-Reserve/d5501-a14429) you can swim through an underground river and take in all the mysterious stalactites. Then top off your three days in Playa del Carmen with a [[sunset](#)

[cruise](https://docs.google.com/document/d/12fcy5Hm3fp1bj8Nre4DSoKkTSZBdm8Wkl5tySYM_Ljgk/edit?tab=t.0)](https://docs.google.com/document/d/12fcy5Hm3fp1bj8Nre4DSoKkTSZBdm8Wkl5tySYM_Ljgk/edit?tab=t.0).

<https://www.viator.com/tours/Playa-del-Carmen/Rio-Secreto-Nature-Reserve-from-Playa-del-Carmen/d5501-3206PCMRIO>