

# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TRIP TO MEXICO'S CENOTES



The cenotes in Mexico are beautiful, and if you have not dived here before, you are in for a treat! If you have already visited Under the Jungle, welcome back. You know that you are in for some phenomenal dives. In the interest of protecting you from booking days and being unable to use them, please consider the following tips and hints.

## Cave Diving and Training are Exhausting

We train long and hard days. Even non-training, recreational cave diving is tiring!

- For courses requiring more than five days, it is essential that you schedule days off for mental and physical rest.
- For recreational/fun cave diving, it is still a good idea to schedule a few days off!

If you do not schedule rest days and need to cancel a day, you will not be refunded for the unused day, as your booking has prevented the instructor from taking other work. However, if you schedule rest days and then choose to use one of your rest days for additional training or diving, we will simply charge you per diem. It is in your interest to schedule days off!

We have an on-staff porter available for \$30 USD/day. Having someone move your gear around can significantly reduce fatigue and give you more time for training.

## We Are All-Weather Divers

Weather does not affect dive conditions in the cenotes. As long as driving conditions are safe, we will not cancel dives. The region does not get cold, but we often have heavy, sporadic rain showers. We suggest bringing a lightweight rain jacket and keeping it with you.

## Ear Infections

Cenote water is quite clean. However, as in all freshwater environments, native bacteria and microbes will be present. No matter how resistant your ears are, unless you live and dive in the cenotes full-time, your ears will not be acclimated to the local microbes.

Treat your ears preventatively to avoid infection. Divers often use ear beer, a 50% mixture of alcohol and vinegar, or straight isopropyl alcohol. These are provided free of charge at the beginning of your trip. Other divers use antibiotic ear drops (highly effective), which cost only a few dollars at the local pharmacy. We can run you by the pharmacy or be sure we have them on hand upon your arrival if you give us advanced notice.

No matter what preventative medicine you use, treat your ears immediately upon exiting the water (still in your suit, standing at the back of the truck). Treating your ears an hour later at the shop is not effective. A time delay allows microbes to flourish in the hot environment and increases your risk of ear infection.

## Gastrointestinal Issues

Street tacos are great. We get it. However, you are not used to the local food, and while it is delicious, you have a choice: eat adventurously or avoid gastrointestinal issues. Eat boring, pre-packaged food, fried food, and other dishes that are less likely to have bacteria living on them. Keep your culinary adventures for your dry day at the end of the trip.

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## Injury

The entrances to the cenotes can be slippery and unstable. Bring close-toed, stable shoes with good soles. Crocs (as ugly as they are) work well in this environment. If you are accident-prone or prefer not to carry your tanks down difficult stairs and tricky jungle paths, consider hiring our on-staff porter for \$30 USD/day. He is worth every penny and makes the logistics easier.

## Avoid Gear Issues

Do not bring recently serviced regulators or equipment to Mexico without first test-diving it in a pool. Test suits, masks, fins, and other accessories in your local dive environment if possible. The exception is brand-new regulators, sidemount harnesses, and backmount rigs. Anything else that you can test, test!

Set up and test your regulators and tanks at the shop each day before heading out. We provide divers with an equipment checklist, which guides will run daily before leaving the shop. The time to run the checklist is after gear is in the truck, immediately before leaving. Visually confirm that each item is in the truck. Five minutes of annoyance running the checklist can save a course or a trip. Under no circumstance should you leave the shop without running the checklist.

## Pre-existing Medical Issues

Be sure to read the liability release and medical form before paying a deposit, and bring a doctor's clearance for diving if you have any "yes" answers on the medical form.

## Trip Insurance

To protect your investment in your trip, we urge you to purchase trip insurance and to add the option for "cancellation for any reason." Companies such as Dive Assure, Allianz, and DAN all offer dive trip insurance, although we are not explicitly recommending any of those companies.

## DAN Insurance:

The local chamber here accepts DAN and can attend to most dive-related injuries. Under the Jungle pays a membership with them, and our divers get very cheap consults. Consider that medical care is much cheaper than it is in the USA, and consulting a doctor and paying out of pocket is often worthwhile.

## Insects

Remember that you will be in the jungle and that there will be insects. Bring loose, lightweight comfortable clothing that covers you fully. Before diving, the use of bug spray on your skin is prohibited, but you can spray your clothes! If you have strong reactions to bug bites, consider bringing Afterbite or a similar product to reduce swelling.

## Sun Exposure

While cavern and cave diving is not like being on a boat, you will still be in the sun. Sunblock is prohibited before diving. Concerned divers should bring a hat or sun coverage to avoid contaminating the cenotes.

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## Dehydration

You will be loaned reusable water bottles for the duration of your trip. We fill the water bottles with purified water. Extremely purified water. Purified water in Mexico has zero minerals or salts, and it is possible to become dehydrated even after drinking liters a day. Bring your favorite hydration tablets with you on your trip, or buy a bottle of Gatorade or other electrolytes and mix it with your water.

## Batteries

Under the Jungle has AA batteries and CR2 batteries for Shearwater Transmitters at the shop. We do not keep watch-style batteries in stock, so be sure to bring extra computer batteries if your computer uses a watch-style battery.

## Drysuits

We have Aquaseal and DUI Zip Seals in stock. There is an excellent repair center up the road, but when possible, bring your spare seals and parts to facilitate drysuit repair, as these items are expensive in Mexico. Consider packing a second set of undergarments. Mexico is humid and nothing dries quickly. Under the Jungle does not have catheters or other p-valve supplies at the shop, so bring what you need!

## Back-up Clothes

If you are diving dry, bring a change of clothes that you can switch into for the ride home if your dry suit floods.

## Transportation

Transportation to the shop is not included in our prices or reservations. We are happy to pick divers up and drop them off as a courtesy, as long as the location is logistically reasonable and pick-ups are legal there. If you desire a pick up in the mornings, clear the location with us before booking it.

## Security at Dive Sites

As with any major tourist destination, the Riviera Maya is generally very safe. However, there's always the occasional, mostly opportunistic, occurrence of theft. In major touristic areas like the 5th Ave in Playa there is more organized pickpocketing, etc. Bank card cloning (or skimming) is unfortunately an issue in Mexico. Use ATMs inside banks or shopping centers, not the street ATMs. Never leave bank cards out of your sight when paying.

Don't carry large amounts of cash on your person. For dive days you'll only need cash for incidentals or a snack if you haven't packed one. Leave excess cash and cards at your accommodation. We are happy to store your cell phone and other valuables at the shop for the day.