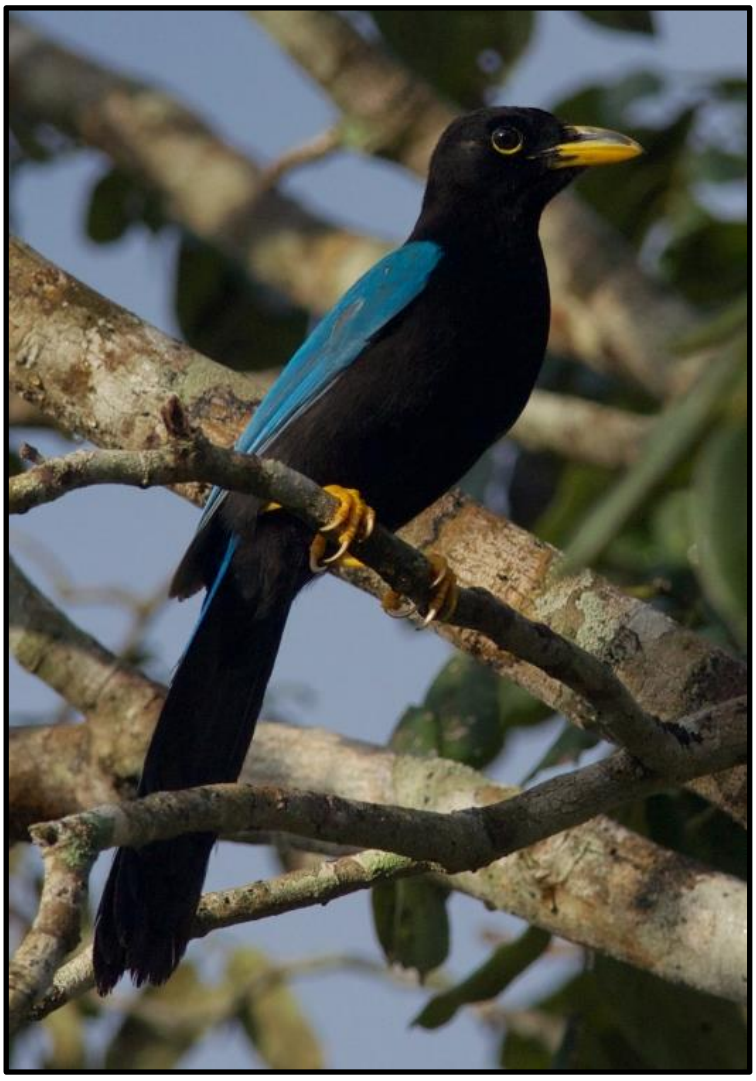
Mexico

Yucatan Peninsula

19th March to 25th March 2023 (7 days)



Yucatan Jay by Clayton Burne

Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula is a large limestone shield, protruding into the Gulf of Mexico and the clear, blue Caribbean Sea. Being surrounded by water on three sides, and having very little topographical relief, the Yucatan has very distinct habitats: and, therefore, some very distinct birds. In fact, much of the Peninsula's wildlife cannot be seen anywhere else. On this short tour, which can be taken in conjunction with our fantastic Cuba tours, we will visit the best birding sites on the peninsula, thereby maximising our potential to see the special birds and wildlife of this beautiful region within spectacular surrounds. Furthermore, this tour is conducted at a very relaxed pace and promises to be a very enjoyable birding and cultural adventure!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival into Cancun, transfer to Cozumel via Playa del Carmen**
Day 2	**Cozumel Island**
Day 3	**Cozumel to Rio Lagartos National Park**
Day 4	**Rio Lagartos NP to Merida**
Day 5	**Uxmal & surrounds**
Day 6	**Merida area to Coba Archaeological site**
Day 7	**Coba Archaeological site & surrounds to Cancun, final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Cozumel Vireo by Clayton Burne

Cozumel Island. Though only a short ferry ride away from the mainland, this minuscule island hosts no less than three endemic species! Sadly, the Cozumel Thrasher has not been reliably reported since 2006 (and was presumed extinct before that), after Hurricane Gilbert devastated the island in 1988. However, most of the original host of Cozumel endemic species and subspecies can still be found easily enough. We'll bird around our lodge and in nearby woodland for the sought after Cozumel Emerald, Cozumel and Yucatan Vireos as well as the localised sub-species of House Wren, sometimes split as Cozumel Wren.

A number of species are restricted to Caribbean island habitats such as Black Catbird, Caribbean Elaenia, Mangrove Vireo, Mangrove Cuckoo, White-crowned Pigeon and Caribbean Dove whilst several unique sub-species are to be found of Western Spindalis, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Roadside Hawk, Mangrove Warbler, Yellow-faced Grassquit and Bananaquit.

If we are very lucky, we may stumble upon the shy and Critically Endangered Pygmy (Cozumel) Racoon. With an estimated population numbering around 250, we would be most fortunate indeed!

Rio Lagartos National Park. We be birding various site such as mangroves, dry woodlands, scrub and savannah in and around Rio Lagartos National Park. As we close in on the northern edge of the Yucatan Peninsula, the vegetation becomes ever more stunted and drier. Some birding will be done on foot but may also involve the use of boats to course the waterways at leisure.

Amongst the stunted, often windswept vegetation we will search out the endemic Yucatan Wren, Orange Oriole and Mexican Sheartail, while farmlands are our preferred location to find the Yucatan Bobwhite, Lesser Roadrunner and Yucatan Woodpecker (a much smaller, but similar version of Velasquez's).

A comfortable ride around the lagoon should see us picking up Bare-throated Tiger Heron, the skulking Rufous-necked Wood Rail, *bryanti* sub-species of Mangrove Warbler, and a horde of common wetland species such as Reddish Egret, Boat-billed and Tricolored Herons, American Flamingo, American White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Crane Hawk, Common Black Hawk and American Pygmy Kingfisher. Further time spent in the scrubby habitat may elicit Grey-crowned Yellowthroat or Yellow-faced Grassquit.



Mexican Sheartail by Eric Antonio Martinez



Yucatan Wren by Clayton Burne

Uxmal. The gorgeous archaeological site of Uxmal is host to several interesting species including Bat Falcon Velasquez's Woodpecker, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, noisy flocks of White-fronted Amazons, diurnal Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Rose-throated Becard, Spot-breasted Wren, Orange Oriole, Yucatan Woodpecker, and we'll surely enjoy a flock of Yucatan Jays at some point whilst Northern Rough-winged Swallow (Ridgway's) with its characteristic white loral spot dance overhead.

Merida. Our main target in this area is the recently split Yucatan Gnatcatcher, whilst other species in the area include White-eyed Vireo, Couch's Kingbird, American Flamingo, Roseate Spoonbill, various herons and egrets, American White & Brown Pelicans, Anhinga, Common Black Hawk and the fantastic Mangrove Vireo. Nocturnal birding in the area may turn up Yucatan Nightjar and Yucatan Poorwill.

Coba Archaeological Site and surrounds. We'll focus on forest specialists, where a few hours birding can turn up any number of cracking species, including Ocellated Turkey (with plenty of luck!), Ornate Hawk-Eagle, White-fronted and Yucatan Amazons, Rose- throated Tanager, Plain Chachalaca and the soon to be split Aztec Parakeet (from Olive-throated). Regional endemics such as Wedge-tailed Sabrewing and White- bellied Emerald are fairly common, whilst Cinnamon Hummingbird, Canivet's Emerald, Green-breasted Mango, Black-headed and Gartered Trogons, Keel-billed Toucan, Altamira Oriole and Turquoise-browed Motmot provide us with ample colour and character.

Delving deeper into the forest may elicit the shy, Yellow-billed Cacique, Smoky-brown and the spectacularly large Pale-billed Woodpeckers, Ruddy, Tawny-winged and Northern Barred Woodcreepers, Yucatan, Brown and Green Jays, White-bellied and Spot-breasted Wrens, Hooded and Yellow-tailed Orioles, the lovely Grey-throated Chat and Green-backed Sparrow. We can also expect to see several North American warblers that may encompass Black-and-white, Hooded, Magnolia, American Yellow, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-throated and Black-throated Green, Common and Grey-crowned Yellowthroat, American Redstart and Northern Parula. We have more chances here for Yucatan Nightjar and Yucatan Poorwill if we have not seen them already.



Ocellated Turkey by Clayton Burne

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Suitable for most birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease		Undemanding. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions. Several target species that can be tricky
Accommodation		Comfortable +
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on flat ground/roads/sandy trails. Optional climbing of ruins/pyramids is difficult.
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality roads. Several long drives.
Photography		Can be good. No dedicated hides. [*high-end camera gear is not allowed in most of the ruins without professional permits that are difficult and very expensive to obtain].
Annoyances		Mosquitos and bloodsucking flies

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 7;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled water;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- Return Ferry;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes made need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It can be hot with harsh sun in some areas of Mexico, especially along the coast, so please come prepared with hats and sun cream for protection. Humidity levels are also high along the coast.
- Mosquitoes and tiny bloodsucking flies can be numerous at times and it's advisable to pack a good supply of effective insect repellent.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is very comfortable and a variety of western and local cuisines are available.
- The ferry ride to Cozumel is aboard a large scheduled ferry. Hand luggage is restricted to a small carryon purse, tote bag or small backpack. All large backpacks, suitcases and other bags need to be checked onto the vessel and will only be accessible again when reaching shore. The ferry ride is short, and thus should pose no impediment in this respect. Your tour leader will help arrange the checking of luggage.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour departs from Cancun on day 1 with a road transfer to Playa del Carmen preceding an evening ferry ride across to Cozumel Island. The tour will conclude in the mid-afternoon of day 7 with a roads transfer from Coba to Cancun.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Cancun International Airport, Cancun (IATA: CUN) is the main port of entry for this tour and is well serviced by many international carriers.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements. The following website provides detailed information about visa eligibility and assistance with online applications options where viable: Visa HQ for Travel

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.