



# go “green” in the land of chocolate

EXPERIENCE THE MAYAN WAY OF LIFE WHILE INDULGING YOURSELF IN ECO-FRIENDLY COMFORT.

As 2012 approaches, there is renewed interest in Mayans and their prophecies. If you want to learn more about this ancient culture, from Mayan ceremonies to making the *kakawa* they invented (Mayan chocolate, pronounced *ka-kaw*), journey to the Maya heartland, a nature-rich area the size of Connecticut in the southern Yucatán Peninsula. This region holds the largest unspoiled tropical jungle in Mexico, a dynamic indigenous culture, the ruins of 10 ancient Mayan cities and (best of all) almost no tourists.

Located between the cities of Campeche and Chetumal (both of which have international airports), earth-friendly Chicanná Ecovillage Resort is a successful experiment in

sustainability. It stores rainwater, generates solar power, heats its own H<sub>2</sub>O and ingeniously cools guest suites—without AC. You’ll enjoy manicured gardens, a refreshing pool with a jungle backdrop, and superb international cuisine.

From the resort’s observation tower, you can see Mayan temples poking through the miles of treetops. Head out on your own to the nearby Mayan cities or arrange a guided trek—ruins, jungle, a local village—the choice is yours, much of it within walking distance.

For the ultimate aerobic workout, climb to the top of one of the temples at nearby Xpujil (pronounced *shpu-heel*, shown above). Your Mayan adventure will leave you invigorated and renewed—and longing for more.

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**BEST TIME TO TRAVEL:**  
November through April is high season; low season (May through October) brings higher temperatures, higher humidity and heavy rains.

**LANGUAGE SPOKEN:**  
Spanish and Yucatec Maya; resort staff and tour guides usually speak English.

**WHAT TO PACK:** Insect repellent, sunscreen, hat and comfortable walking shoes. Did we mention insect repellent?

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**  
Chicanná Ecovillage Resort, 011 52 (981) 811-9192, Chicanna EcovillageResort.com (Rates begin at \$100.)

**HOW TO GET THERE:**  
Fly into Campeche, Chetumal, Cancun or Belize City. (Fares vary by point of arrival.) Rent a car or take an ADO bus to Chicanná Ecovillage Resort, located on Hwy 186 in the Campeche jungle.

**OTHER RESOURCES:**  
MayaNature.com.mx



Hey! While in town, check this out ...

## Organic Farming Village

If there were an epicenter of the Maya heartland, the *ejido* (farming cooperative) of Veinte de Noviembre would hold the distinction. There’s no store, restaurant, hotel or ATM. Instead, some savvy residents of this village of 100 households share their traditional way of life with outsiders in an effort to sustain the community, the culture and the environment.

Your experience begins with a community member explaining *ejido* life (in English) over a home-cooked Mayan breakfast. A favorite you’ll likely be served is *brazo de reina*, which is a hearty *chaya* (spinachlike green) and egg tamale wrapped in banana leaves, roasted outdoors and served with tomato salsa and a sprinkling of toasted pumpkin seeds (shown above with pastries, fresh fruit and warm sweetened chocolate from raw cacao beans). After the meal, your host will escort you to a few more homes to meet local artisans. Everyone will get to try a hand at whipping up the *kakawa* drink.

This tour can be reserved through Chicanná Ecovillage Resort for a group of six to 12 at a total cost of \$50 (regardless of size) and an additional \$7 per person for the meal. \*



For more pictures from our Mayan album, see this article at WellBella.com.