YUCATÁN:
COZUMEL ISLAND, RIO LAGARTOS, AND THE ANCIENT MAYAN RUINS

With Gabriel Willow, Alex Dzib, and other local guides
Saturday, February 15 – Monday, February 24, 2014
(Pre-trip workshop: Wednesday, January 22, 2014, 6-8pm)

USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR TOUR

YUCATÁN TOUR BASIC PACKAGE – INCLUDED ITEMS
The Yucatán tour basic price of $2,295 includes one pre-trip workshop with guide Gabriel Willow, double-occupancy lodging and transportation within Yucatán (including transfer to and from the Cancún International Airport), all meals from breakfast on February 16 to breakfast February 24 except those indicated below*, entrance fees to all parks and reserves, and the guide services of NYC Audubon’s Gabriel Willow and local Yucatán guides.

Not included:
1) Airfare to and from the Yucatán
2) Lodge/hotel extras (laundry, room service, phone calls, etc.)
3) Alcoholic beverages
4) *The following meals are not included in the basic trip price:
   • Day 1 – dinner; Day 5 – lunch; Day 9 – lunch and dinner.
   • Breakfast on Day 10 is included!
5) Gratuities (this includes tips for our local guides, drivers, and chamber service at the hotels).

SINGLE ROOMS
Many of our participants prefer to have a single room. The single supplement price is $450.

SHARED ROOMS
We almost always have a friendly combination of couples and solo travelers on our tours. If you are not traveling with a companion and would like to be placed with a roommate, we will do our best to place you with another participant of the same gender. If we are not able to place you with another participant, you will be charged the single supplement fee.

OUR GUIDE
Gabriel Willow leads many tours for NYC Audubon, both within the five boroughs and beyond. Before he came to NYC, Gabriel studied and birded in the Yucatán, where he actually helped train future bird guides in the region! For more information about Gabriel Willow, please see his Trip Leader Profile on our website.

PRE-TRIP WORKSHOP
One pre-trip workshop is included in the tour package. Tour guide Gabriel Willow will teach you about the ecology of the Yucatán peninsula and prepare you for the incredible diversity of bird species you can expect to see (including many endemic species you cannot find anywhere else in the world!). We hope this will enhance your experience in the Yucatán. The workshop will also provide an opportunity to answer any questions you may have about logistics of the tour, things to bring, etc.

GENERAL ATMOSPHERE AND SCHEDULE
Part of the pleasure of organizing group trips is that one never knows exactly who the group will be! We generally find our tour groups to be a nice and friendly mixture of interesting and interested folks, who enjoy a fun and relaxed atmosphere together. In terms of scheduling, we expect most of our participants will be quite excited about seeing—
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what else?—BIRDS! And given the dazzling variety of birds that the Yucatán offers, this is not surprising. The group will generally arise early, and have meals together (dinners will be more sit-down affairs at hotels or restaurants, whereas our breakfasts and lunches will be light and healthy, and on-the-go). We will spend most of the day birding, occasionally taking in other sights, at a leisurely pace. That said, participants are free to “take some time off” to pursue their own interests at the beautiful lodges: Bird from the veranda, read a book, sketch, or just stretch out in a hammock and wonder at the natural splendor around you. Photography buffs are also frequent participants, and there will of course be many opportunities for great wildlife and landscape photography.

WEATHER AND TEMPERATURE
The Yucatán Peninsula is very flat, and very close to sea level, so temperatures are quite warm throughout the year. Temperatures inland are somewhat higher than on the coast. We will visit different types of habitat, including beaches, semi-arid scrubland, wetlands and tropical forest, each with a slightly different climate. Since it is on our side of the equator, February in the Yucatán is winter too – but with average day temperatures in the mid 80’s, what a delightful change from the NYC winter! We will be arriving just after the rainy season (October-January) and should experience warm tropical days with little to no rain. While it is true rain can occur in any month, unless it is very strong the rain will not stop the group from going out birding.

HIKING/WALKING ON THE TOUR
Walking will be at a comfortable “birder’s pace.” The trails will be manageable for participants without any serious physical difficulties.

HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS
You should make sure you are up-to-date on your routine vaccinations. Recommended vaccines for travel to the Yucatán include hepatitis A and typhoid. Avoidance of mosquitoes in this region is important to prevent malaria – you can also choose to take antimalarial drugs prior to, during, and possibly after your visit (talk to your doctor about how you can prevent malaria while traveling). Lastly, rabies can be found in dogs, bats and other mammals in the Yucatán – so although there is a low risk of exposure, it may be good to get this shot as well, as we will be spending a large amount of time outdoors. Consult with your physician about what other vaccines or medicines are appropriate for you.


REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS
A valid passport is required for travel to the Yucatán; please make sure your passport is valid through 5/1/14. Travelers from the U.S. can obtain a Mexican visa and their Mexican tourist card (also called a Tourist Migration Form) upon arrival.

CURRENCY AND CREDIT CARDS
The Mexican Peso is the official currency of Mexico; most tourism-related areas accept U.S. Dollars, in fact prices in the tourist-heavy coastal regions are often quoted in U.S. dollars. To avoid confusion, they use the abbreviations "Dl.$" for dollars and "M.N." (moneda nacional, or national currency) or "M.X.P." for Mexican Pesos.

Small-denomination bills and coins can be hard to find. It’s advisable to start collecting them early in your trip so that you can make change when paying for goods and services in the Yucatán. This is especially true for the weekends and Mexican holidays when the banks are closed. If somebody offers you a damaged bill, refuse to accept it: Mexican currency that is damaged in any way will not be accepted by any merchants, money exchanges or banks.
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You can use the U.S. $1 bill is very useful for tipping. A tip of U.S. coins, however, cannot be exchanged into Mexican currency and so is of no value to the service provider.

Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are the most accepted cards at hotels, restaurants, and stores. Some establishments add a 5% to 7% surcharge when you pay with a credit card, particularly American Express. Also be aware of hidden credit card fees while traveling: check with your credit or debit card company to see what fees, if any, will be charged for overseas transactions.

Read more: http://www.frommers.com/destinations/yucatan-peninsula/711499

For the current rate of exchange of USD to MXN, you can visit http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1&From=USD&To=MXN.

FLIGHTS
We will suggest flights that work well with our tour schedule once the trip is confirmed to run. You are of course free to purchase the flights that best suit you. We cannot guarantee that price of flights we suggest will be available at the time of your purchase.

TRIP INSURANCE
We strongly recommend that you purchase trip insurance. It is particularly important for winter trips, when snow and/or illness are more likely to interfere and prevent you from taking part in the trip. We will ask that you sign a waiver stating that we recommend you purchase trip insurance, and that you understand that in the event you are not able to participate in the trip due to unforeseen circumstances, we will not be able to provide a refund to you. We will provide several suggestions for trip insurance upon registration for the tour.

ITEMS TO BRING AND PRE-TRAVEL PREPARATION
We will provide you with a detailed checklist of items to consider bringing a month or more before departure including clothing, guide books, personal care items, etc., as well as specific advice about traveling to the Yucatán.

MISCELLANEOUS NUTS & BOLTS
Time Zone: The Yucatán has GMT - 6, so when it is 12:35PM in the Eastern Time zone (including New York City), it is 11:35AM in the Yucatán.
Voltage: Electric power in the Yucatán is the same as in the United States and Canada, 110V. Some electrical sockets do not accept three-prong or polarized plugs, so we recommend bringing your own adapter, although you can often purchase one from the larger hotels (for example in Cancún).

We hope that this document has addressed many of your questions about our bird tour of the Yucatán. Please feel free to contact Adriana Palmer at apalmer@nycaudubon.org with any other questions or concerns.

Useful links:
Tourism in the Yucatán http://www.yucatan today.com/
Time & Date: http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/city.html?n=153