



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



Tranquil Tulum!

by Amaru & Suzanne, January 15th 2009

Upon arriving in Tulum we realized that we had reached paradise.... Quite fitting that we should be staying at El Paraiso!

When our taxi dropped us off at El Paraiso we knew we had made a great choice, first of all... everything was on the beach (literally), the parking, reception and all the guest houses as well. And the beach itself... it's one of the best ones that we've experienced so far, it's soft, white and just wonderful!!

Checking into our room was a nice surprise as well, the room was simple yet elegant. And it's always a nice touch to everyday walk in to a new towel animal on our bed =)

The only drawback with living on the beach is that everyone else wants a piece of it. Since we were on the best beach in Tulum (with plenty of shade provided by the palm trees, plenty of sun chairs and a nice beach bar) there were bus loads of tourists arriving every day.



El Paraiso
Our home in Tulum



We had different creatures
made up every day...

This of course brings the prices up quite a bit and after seeing the restaurant prices we made a mental note of heading into town every night for dinner ;)

On our first proper day in Tulum we did as little as possible for quite a few hours. We were at the beach, each one of us on a nice sun chair under the palm trees, swimming in the ocean and just enjoying ourselves.

After a few hours though we got a bit bored and decided to check out the local Mayan temple here in Tulum. We walked there from our hotel, it was only a 15min walk but we seemed to be the only ones that were actually walking, everywhere we saw taxis, rental cars, buses and bikes... Doesn't anyone walk anymore?

Back to the ruins... both Suz and I agreed that these were the "clever" Mayans. Not only do they have a very impressive city which contains everything Mayan, but they also created their city right next to the ocean and the beach.... not bad =)

We went there around 3pm since we knew that the ruins would be absolutely packed during the day and we were trying to avoid the worst crowds (the bus tour people). Unfortunately there were still quite a few people here, the beach especially was packed with people... no big loss there though as we could just go back to our own beach.

The next morning it was time for me to do some diving again... this time in a Cenote (an underwater cavern/cave dive). I had chosen to dive at one of the more famous cenotes in Tulum, the Dos Ojos Cenote.



Our beach was one of
the best ones we've ever seen



The beach bar
Very nice...

Diving in a Cenote is completely different to diving in the ocean... Since I'm not a qualified cave diver I'm only allowed to dive in caverns, not caves. The main difference is that in a cavern you're never far from the surface (even though it might look and feel that way occasionally).

The feeling of diving in a cenote is something that can't be described, it has to be experienced.... It's like looking inside a cave, but instead of walking along it you fly through it, the fact that occasionally you're not sure where the surface is (it's very dark around you) is a bit scary but exiting at the same time. Also, having visibility of 100m isn't too bad either ;)

After diving the Dos Ojos Cenote, I know that I'm hooked and that I will have to come back here in the near future for some more dives....

While I was out diving, Suz as always, stayed by the beach. This time she wasn't as lucky with the weather though, it was a bit cloudy and overcast with the occasional rain so instead of laying on the beach, she got herself a massage instead.... it's a hard life!

That evening we picked up our rental car for the next 24 hours. We wanted to see the famous (and new Wonder of the World) Chichen Itza and didn't feel like being transported like cattle in their huge buses. And also, there were no tours available from Tulum (Well, we found one but it was around \$US 85 per person).

We were a bit apprehensive about renting a car in Mexico, we had read and heard a lot of stories about the corruption of the police and how you should just pay them 50-100 pesos if you're pulled over.



Yup...
This is how you relax!



Palm trees and blue sky...
We're really enjoying Tulum!

Also, if you don't have adequate insurance and hit another car, you might spend a night in a Mexican jail.... not something I was looking forward to trying out.

But back to the story... we picked up the car the night before and the next morning we set out at 5.30am (!!) and started our journey towards Chichen Itza. The journey there by car takes anywhere between 2½-3 hours depending on traffic (and how many times the cops pull you over) and we wanted to be there at 8am when the park opened to avoid the LARGE tour groups coming from Cancun and Playa del Carmen.

We actually made it there by 7.45am and we were the first car at the gate....

Once there, I opted for a short guided tour since the last guide we had had been so great. Well, he might not have been as great as Juan in Tikal but he still knew what he was talking about. A lot of the history was very similar to the one we were given at Tikal but there were a few new things as well.

After the guided tour we strolled around by ourselves for another hour or so before we decided to start our return to Tulum. On our way back we still had plenty of time to spare so we decided to visit another ruin, Coba.

These ruins were more similar to Tikal as they were both located deep in the jungle. We strolled here for about 2 hours or so and then got back on the road.



Suz
in the water



Suz and I
In the water off our beach

Just before we got back to Tulum we decided to make a quick stop-over at another cenote, the Grand Cenote. Suz hadn't seen a cenote yet and I was looking forward to a nice cool dip after a full day of exploring.

Grand Cenote, was beautiful as well... I rented some snorkeling equipment and swam the cenote up and down while Suz stayed on dry land and got some photos of me playing around in the water.

We came back to Tulum and later on that evening we drove the car back to the rental agency. We walked inside and then the guy followed us outside to do the inspection of the car. The car was parked at a supermarket parking and while he was inside the car checking meters and such, another car hit him from the front.

As it was, no harm was done to the car but we just thought it was funny that we driven all day and never had any problems or issues and just when we're about to return the car, someone hits it!!

The next day it was time for us to move on, the plan was to spend one night in Cancun (not the tourist area) and then fly the next morning to Guadalajara. We both loved Tulum and its beaches, ruins and cenotes. The fact that it's not as touristy as Cancun (yet...) is really nice.

We will definately come back here in the future...



It's a great beach...
Isn't it?



The ruins of Tulum
They have Maya ruins here as well...



We were staying about
15min walk from the ruins



These were the smart Mayans
placing their city next to the ocean =)



That's a large lizard
There were a few of them around



Suz
with the temple in the background



I had to pose
for the same photo as well...



It's time for some more diving
This time in a Cenote



The Dos Ojos Cenote
The visibility is awesome!



During the dive there are
a few openings here and there



It's quite cool to see a few
air bubbles here and there



The dive contains some great stalactites
(or are they stalacmites?)



The day was cloudy and overcast...
normally there is a stronger light



Still pretty awesome
Isn't it?



Swimming through the caves
Difficult to capture the feeling...



It's quite clear what that means
Don't dive away from the lines...



Our divemaster
Posing for the camera



Empanada Joe's
Great coffee and free Wi-Fi



Mexican Bakery
where we got our breakfast bread from



Beer with Lime and Salt?!?
It was revolting...



Chichen Itza
A new Wonder of the World



The famous pyramid
is quite impressive



Suz and I
posing in front of the pyramid



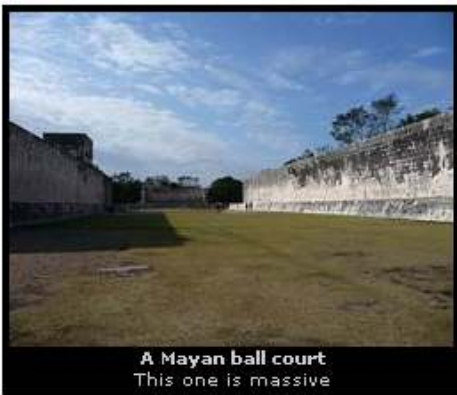
The area is empty
It's good to arrive early



You can just about see
the drawing on the stone



There are some great
drawings to be found everywhere



A Mayan ball court
This one is massive



Some pillars we found
at Chichen Itza



Mayan Tic-Tac-Toe
...or maybe something else



Trying to find some info
regarding this area





Looks inviting doesn't it?
I need to try it out...



This time I just went snorkeling
And it was great!



One of my contacts fell out
I'm trying to get it back in...



On our last night in Tulum
we had some Italian food!

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