

# Xcalak Travel Guide

Helping You Discover Xcalak

[xcalakmexico.com](http://xcalakmexico.com)

**Hey you,**

Yes you. *The awesome traveler headed to Xcalak.*

Thanks for downloading our guide.

With all the tourist essentials inside, planning your vacation should be a breeze.

We have a **bonus** download for you too (if you like free stuff that is):

[>> Xcalak Fun Blog Posts](#)

It's a collection of our best blog posts about Xcalak (the really fun ones).

Please enjoy the guide,  
the free bonus,  
and especially Xcalak.

**~Tim & Heather**

PS – if you can't click the above link, go to <http://xcalakmexico.com/bonus/>





# Inside this Guide

Coming up is the travel details every first-timer to Xcalak (ish-ka-lak) should know. And there are also hidden gems (the stuff that even *some expats* don't know). Here's the outline:

1. [When to Visit](#)
2. [Getting to Xcalak](#)
3. [Accommodations](#)
4. [Cooking + Dining Out](#)
5. [Things to Do](#)
6. [Resources](#)

*Beside the title of each section, you'll find the number of pages in that section.*



# 1. When to Visit

1 page

The *best* time to visit Xcalak depends on your idea of a good vacation.

Here's the overview:

## Best Weather

Xcalak has 3 seasons:

**Dry season** typically lasts November - April, and it's awesome.

**Wet season** runs from May - October when huge amounts of rain can fall in a short time, and then it (usually) gets sunny until the next downpour.

**Hurricane season** generally runs from July – October. September and October are the most likely hurricane-months.

## Best Fly Fishing

The fly fishing season is typically from February - April.

**Barracuda:** Any time of year is a good time for barracuda

**Tarpon:** All year, but June and July are not quite as good

**Snook:** The best time to catch snook in Xcalak is October - June

**Bonefish:** From March - May your chances of a catch go from "good" to "great"

**Permit:** Another fish that stays around Xcalak all year, with your best chance from June - October

## Best Prices

**Low Season** – and cheap accommodations – starts at the beginning of June and lasts until the end of October.

**High Season**, when prices jump, starts at the beginning of November and runs until the end of May.

**Holiday Season** has the highest prices. You'll pay a premium in Xcalak during the week before and after Christmas and New Years.

Holiday prices also apply to Semana Santa (Easter week).

## 2. Getting to Xcalak 5 pages

Unless you're training to run the Ironman, there are only 2 ways to reach Xcalak:

### **Drive**

**The most popular option**

Xcalak is approximately 6 hours from Cancun; most of the drive is on well-paved highway 307.  
After you leave 307, there are smaller paved roads to remote Xcalak.

### **Bus**

**Doable, but restrictive**

Not really recommended as there is no direct bus to Xcalak from Cancun. From Cancun, take the ADO bus to Chetumal, then take a second-class Caribe bus to Xcalak.

*driving is the most practical (and **recommended**) option*

*Check the next page for details on the drive to Xcalak from Cancun International Airport*

# Driving to Xcalak

From Cancun Airport rent a car and drive to Xcalak. It **realistically** takes **6 – 7 hours** (despite what Google says).

## Directions:

Leave Cancun International Airport, and head **south on highway 307** (to Playa del Carmen, Tulum, and Chetumal).

Stock up on **groceries and supplies** in Tulum, a popular tourist town 2 hours south of the Cancun airport.

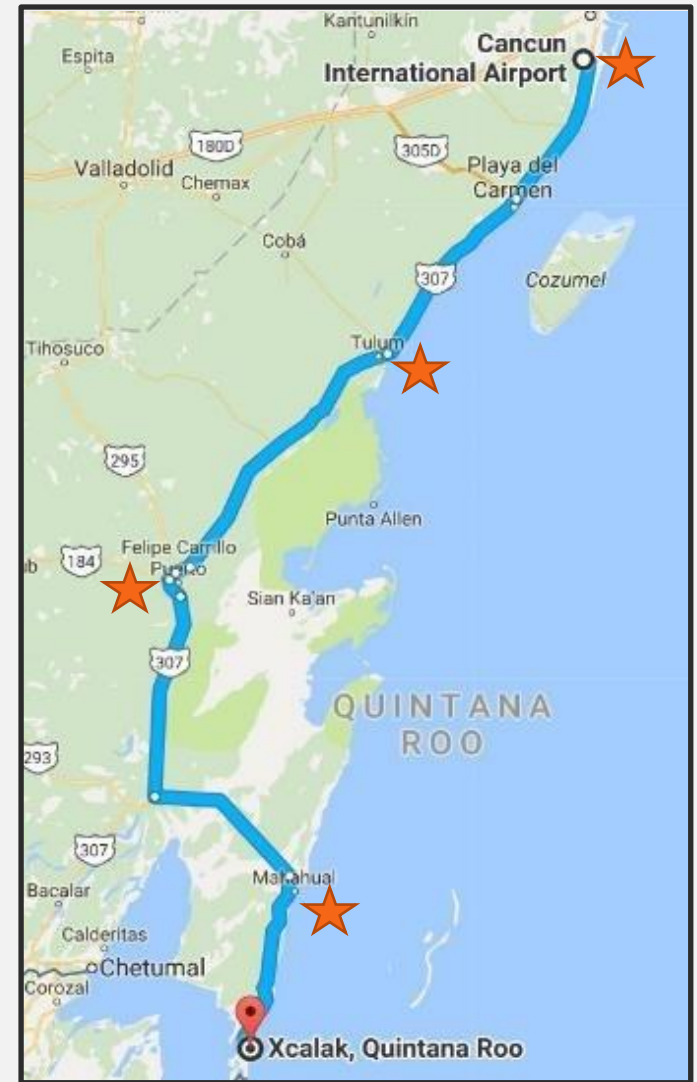
\*optional\* Take the **toll road around Felipe Carrillo Puerto** 1 hour south of Tulum for about 30 pesos **OR** if you missed the groceries in Tulum (or need gas or ATM), stop in town.

Pass through the small town of Limones, and **follow the signs towards Mahahual** (turn left off the 307).

After 51 km / 32 mi, and **before you reach Mahahual, you'll see the sign for Xcalak** telling you to turn right. Just past this intersection is the Mahahual Pemex gas station (**the nearest gas to Xcalak**). The road to Xcalak is 60 km / 37 mi, follow it till you hit a T-intersection.

At the T-intersection **turn left to go to Xcalak Village**.

In about 5 minutes you'll see a sign welcoming you to Xcalak. **You've arrived!**



*Check the next two pages for maps of Xcalak Town and the Beach Road*



# Map of Xcalak Village

by XcalakMexico.com

Highway to:  
 Xcalak Airstrip (2km / 1mi)  
 La Aguada (8km / 5mi)  
 Mahahual (59km / 37mi)  
 Chetumal (198km / 123mi)  
 Tulum (276km / 171mi)  
 Cancun (410km / 254mi)



Library

Basketball Court

Bottled Water & Ice

Toby's

Restaurante Silvia

Accommodations Sign Post

School

Playground

Public Pier

Old Lighthouse

XTC DIVE CENTER

To South Beach Road  
 (no accommodations)  
 (no restaurants)  
 (no attractions)  
 (don't go)

- 1 - National Reef Park Office
- 2 - Adidas Tienda / Store
- 3 - Albotros Tienda / Store
- 4 - Hotelito Carbe Caracol
- 5 - Xcalak Caribe Lodge
- 6 - Caribbean Casa Blanca

To North Beach Road  
 (Accommodations / Hotels)  
 (Reel Inn Restaurant)

# North Beach Road Accommodations

by XcalakMexico.com

0.8km/0.5mi\*



Costa de Cocos

2.7km/1.7mi\*



Hotel Tierra Maya

Casa Paraíso

Kimmel's Kabaña



Reel Inn Restaurant

6.9km/4.3mi\*



Playa Sonrisa

Casa Caracola

Acocote Eco Inn

Sin Duda Villas

9.2km/5.7mi\*

12.8km/8.0mi\*



Casa del Sol

<< To Xcalak - Highway - To Mahahual >>

\*distance to Xcalak Village

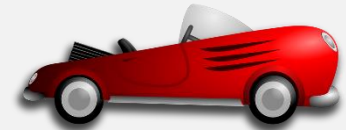
scale 2 km / 1.2 mi



Keep reading for tips on driving  
in Mexico and Xcalak



# Tips for driving in Mexico



## About “topes”...

Along highway 307 you'll see signs with a picture of a speed bump that say “tope”, especially before and after towns. These speed bumps / topes are aggressive. Drive over topes **slowly**. Taking a tope fast will damage your vehicle.

## About gassing up...

Your only option is full-serve, and the attendant should always show you the pump is zeroed before pumping. Choose from Premium or Regular, and use cash or credit card (we prefer cash) at most gas stations on the way to Xcalak.

Gas station attendants are happy to accept a small tip (5 to 10 pesos) after cleaning your windshield and pumping your gas. Gas station bathrooms usually cost 5 pesos.

**Note** – there are no gas stations in Xcalak Village (the closest station is in Mahahual).

## About the dirt roads in Xcalak...

You can travel the roads in Xcalak with a 2-wheel drive rental car. But negotiate the pot holes and bumps **slowly**, keeping an eye out for sunbathing iguanas and speedy motorbikes.

*Once you reach your accommodation – relax.  
Soak up the sun, sea, and maybe a cold cerveza.*

# 3. Accommodations 12 pages

Stay central in Xcalak Village. Or go “off-grid”, staying beachside on the remote (and not creatively-named) north beach road. This guide covers both locations, summarizing the main tourist accommodation in Xcalak.



## ***What does “off grid” mean?***

- Solar power and backup diesel generators provide electricity 24/7
  - There is NO air-conditioning (except for fans and the cool sea breeze)
- Rainwater is collected for showering and for tap water
  - Tap water is NOT potable. Purified water is *usually* provided by your accommodation

*“Off grid” may sound rustic, but there are some pretty luxurious digs in Xcalak*

# Overview

	Distance From Town		Ways to Stay	
Xcalak Accommodations	mi	km	Rooms Apartments Suites	Entire Property Rental
Hotelito Caribe Caracol	In Town	In Town	☀	
Xcalak Caribe Lodge	In Town	In Town	☀	
Caribbean Casa Blanca	In Town	In Town	☀	
Flying Cloud	In Town	In Town	☀	
Costa de Cocos	0.9	1.4	☀	
Xflats @ Tierra Maya Lodge	1.3	2.1	☀	
Casa Paraiso / Reef House	1.6	2.5	☀	☀
Kimmel's Kabaña	1.7	2.7		☀
Playa Sonrisa	4.3	6.9	☀	
Casa Caracola	4.7	7.6		☀
Acocote Eco Inn	4.8	7.8	☀	
Sin Duda Villas	5.0	8.0	☀	
Casa del Sol	8.0	12.8	☀	

Know of a new tourist accommodation? Email us at [contact@xcalakmexico.com](mailto:contact@xcalakmexico.com)



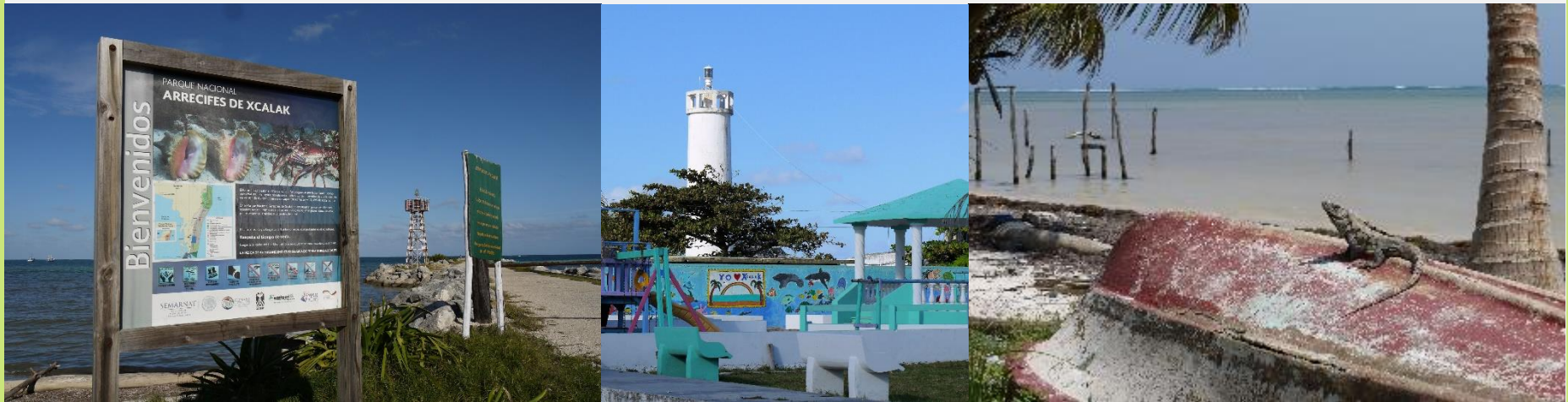
# Accommodations in town

There are only a few tourist accommodations inside Xcalak Village (town). There's way more along the beach road.

**Disadvantage of staying in town:** you'll miss out on the relaxing private beaches and remote jungle living.

**Advantage of staying in town:** you'll be on-grid. That means no worrying about power or water limitations and you'll have A/C!

Staying in town is best for visitors without a car, or if you'll be fly fishing with a guide whose boat leaves from Xcalak's public dock.



## Hotel Caribe Caracol (in town)

**Right in the center of town, this small “hotelito” is on the main street near restaurants and corner stores.**

Known as the locals accommodation in Xcalak, there's no website so you'll have to take your chances when you show up.

We've never been inside this place (it kind of scares us), so we don't have much to say about the rooms or what they're like.

**Our advice:** ask to see a room before taking out your wallet, and be prepared for a Spanish-only conversation.



## Xcalak Caribe Lodge (in town)

**If you can live simple, and you don't have a vehicle, Xcalak Caribe Lodge is one of the best *in-town* places to stay.**

- 3 rooms in the front with a view of the beach
- 2 cheaper rooms in the back

Located on the town's beachside road, Xcalak Caribe Lodge is aimed at fly fishers. The restaurant attached to the Lodge serves breakfast (included), and dinner for guests (arrange a pre-paid meal package along with your booking).



## Caribbean Casa Blanca (in town)

**Next to the Xcalak Reef Park Office, directly in front of Xcalak's beach.**

- 3 apartments (1 on each floor)
- A/C, ceiling fans, kitchens, Sky TV

One of the newest places in town, CCB is a resort-like stay, complete with A/C and TVs in the apartments. It has the town's highest rooftop terrace, with hammocks and an additional dining area.

Cook meals in your apartment, or have the hosts prepare local seafood on the grill. They've also got a wood-fired pizza oven.



## Flying Cloud Hotel (in town-ish)

**Next to XTC Dive Center, perfect for staying during a PADI course.**

- 2 lower rooms
- 1 upper suite
- no kitchens

The Flying Cloud offers basic accommodations in 2 lower rooms (Selva and Playa) and one upper room (Suite). Access to the library, bar, and pool at XTC Dive Center next door.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner available at XTC's Coral Bar & Grill.





# Beachside Accommodations

We listed the Xcalak beachside accommodations in the order you'll find them on the beach road, starting with the closest to town.

Because we like you, here's a heads up:

**Driving the beach road is slow going.** It will take longer than you think.

Go far for the remote beauty. Or stay closer to town and avoid the body-pounding drive.

**FYI ->** *We are freelance writers. We don't work for any of these properties, nor were we compensated for our reviews. These are straight-up, honest opinions.*



## Costa de Cocos – 0.87 miles / 1.4 km

**The original tourist accommodation in Xcalak – cheap, rustic, and comfortable.**

- private palapa huts
- en suite bathrooms

One of the only accommodation in Xcalak with a public restaurant open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Guided fly fishing trips leave from their dock, and there's an on-site dive shop.

The small strip of beach at Cocos isn't much to brag about, but the price is right and the restaurant is excellent.

[See our exclusive photo tour of Costa de Cocos](#)



## Xflats at Tierra Maya Lodge – 1.3 miles / 2.1 km

**Luxury fly-fishing lodge in Xcalak.**

- 7 beachfront suites
- ceiling fans **and** A/C

The accommodation for the Xflats fly fishing guiding service, Tierra Maya is geared towards fly fishing, with rod racks in all the rooms alongside Mayan themed décor. Enjoy meals and cocktails at the onsite Fish Bar and Restaurant.



## Casa Paraiso / Reef House – 1.5 miles / 2.5 km

**Casa Paraiso is actually two properties: the Reef House and Xcalak on the Fly.**

Reef House:

- 3 units for rent
- kitchen available in the upper unit only

Xcalak on the Fly:

- all-inclusive fly-fishing lodge
- 4 ocean-facing suites, each with a complete kitchen

Both spots are located along the same beach and share a dock.



## Kimmel's Kabaña – 1.7 miles / 2.7 km

**If you want a whole property to yourself, take your family to Kimmel's Kabaña.**

- private apartment
- 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a full kitchen

An on-site caretaker makes sure your visit goes smoothly, and a cleaning service comes approximately 3 days / week. Enjoy the rooftop patio and basic amenities.





## Playa Sonrisa – 4.3 miles / 6.9 km

**ALERT! Playa Sonrisa is a "clothing optional" resort, and is ideal for couples.**

- private bungalow
- upper level room with a balcony
- lower level room with a beach walk-out

Complimentary breakfast is served at the on-site restaurant Loco Nutz Après Ski. Dinner is also available by reservation. Welcoming to newbie naturalists.

Come here to erase both tanlines and insecurities. No kids allowed.

[See our \(safe for work\) exclusive photo tour of Playa Sonrisa](#)



## Casa Caracola – 4.7 miles / 7.6 km

**Private accommodation with lagoon access, rooftop lounge, screened palapa dining room, and classy décor.**

- sleeps 6 guests

The rooms are huge, on-site caretakers clean the room and help guests. Enjoy the immaculate beach, and the stunning view from the balcony.

Casa Caracola has lagoon access, so you can try fishing or kayaking someplace other than the sea.



## Acocote Eco Inn – 4.8 miles / 7.8 km

**Stylish B&B with an on-site fly-fishing shop.**

- 3 suites
- 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, and a living/dining area

As it's an "eco" inn, the owners are committed to *sustainability in style*. On-site is a screened-in palapa building with dining area to keep you safe from mosquitoes as you enjoy a drink and the evening sunset.

[See our exclusive photo tour of Acocote Eco Inn](#)



## Sin Duda Villas – 5.0 miles/ 8.0 km

**A colorful, funky beach-front B&B with legendary margaritas.**

- 3 double suites
- 2 full apartments with kitchen
- 1 studio apartment
- 2 lagoon-side apartments (for budget travelers)

Breakfast is included in the kitchen (or shared kitchen) areas, and rooms are cleaned daily. Leave the kids, it's adults only here.

Enjoy the rooftop sun deck or snorkeling right from the beach.

[See our exclusive photo tour of Sin Duda Villas](#)



## Casa del Sol – 8.0 miles / 12.8 km

**The closest thing to a private beach in Xcalak.**

- upper unit with a balcony
- 2 lower suites walk out onto the beach

This is the most remote tourist accommodation in Xcalak.

Make your own meals in your kitchen and explore the reef in a glass-bottom kayak or relax in a hammock. Watch pelicans fishing as you walk along the beach, or read a book from the on-site library.





# More on accommodations

**Most** accommodations on the beach road have the following available:

- snorkel gear for enjoying the shallow coral
- flotation vests for swimming safety
- kayaks for fishing (or exploring)
- bicycles for cruising the beach road
- hammocks for, you know, hammocking
- lounge chairs for lounging
- library (with English books) for the brain massage
- traditional palapa shelters for sea-side shade
- arrangements for fly fishing, snorkel tours, boat tours, land tours, etc.

Want the contact info for all these accommodations?

Go to <http://xcalakmexico.com/accommodations-in-xcalak/>



# 4. Cooking + Dining Out

5 pages

Choose an accommodation with a kitchen and save money by cooking your own food.

You can buy groceries in Tulum...

... or go local, and purchase from the traveling grocery trucks.

**What the heck is a grocery truck?** See the next page...

About Restaurants: With a population of only 400 (plus a few expats), it shouldn't shock you that **the restaurant selection in Xcalak is limited.**

In fact, there are only a few public restaurants. Skip ahead 3 pages to see our restaurant reviews.

*Don't count on your credit card in Xcalak – bring Mexican Pesos or US Dollars*



# Grocery trucks

In Xcalak, expats and visitors alike rely on grocery trucks to deliver fresh food and packaged snacks. Grocery trucks ply the village streets **and** the beach road, most days of the week.

**Turn the page for examples of what the grocery trucks sell.**

When the truck stops outside your accommodation, you'll hear a horn or a siren announcing its presence. Grab some pesos, a shopping bag, and head out to see what's for sale.

**FYI** – the farther you stay from town, the more picked-over the grocery truck selection will be





## Typical Grocery Truck Fare (selection varies)

- fresh vegetables (potatoes, cucumbers, onions, tomatoes, broccoli, and peppers)
- fresh fruit (mangoes, apples, pineapples, oranges, and cantaloupe)
- fresh, **locally butchered** meat (chicken and pork)
- eggs
- fresh fish (in season)
- corn tortillas (sold by the kilo and half kilo)
- brand-name, sweetened yogurt
- kids (sugar) cereal
- soda pop and chips

*In the high season you'll also find trucks selling shrimp, cheesecakes, and frozen pizzas. Yum!*

## Not sold in Xcalak:

- most dairy products
- herbs
- breakfast cereal for grown-ups
- sliced bread
- packaged meat (hot dogs, bacon)



**\* The booze selection in Xcalak is limited**

Be sure to stock up on your alcohol of choice **before** coming to Xcalak.



# Restaurants



## Toby's

The in-town favorite for expats and tourists alike. Get ready for a laid back beach café, complete with plastic chairs and sandy floor. Open (usually) for lunch and dinner, head to Toby's for seafood (try the fresh ceviche or fried-coconut shrimp).



## Silvia's Restaurant

At Silvia's you'll find low-key dining amongst locals, and a plethora of shells and corals displayed on the wall. Unlike Toby's, there isn't much English but just say "fish tacos" or "fish of the day". You'll be glad you did.



## The Reel Inn Restaurant

Located at Costa de Cocos, the Reel Inn specializes in homebrewed beer, moonshine, and pizza (Friday is pizza night!). The original place to meet expats and chill by the water, Cocos has an extensive English menu and English-speaking staff.

# ...more restaurants



## **The Coral Bar & Grill**

Located at XTC Dive Center, this restaurant serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner (great for guests at XTC's Flying Cloud Hotel).

American favorites like burgers, and chicken and fish dishes are available. Relax with a cervesa in the evening at the bar. Most clientele are divers with XTC.



# Did you know?

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We know that it takes a special individual to donate  
for a service they **already** got for free.

We also know that only 1 out of every 100 travelers  
who use this guide will respond with kindness.

Could you be one of the few,  
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PS – the donate button takes you to <http://xcalakmexico.com/bonus>  
with a secure donate button for PayPal, and a bonus download

PPS – Still have questions? [Email us](#) and we'll do our best to answer

# 5. Things to Do

5 pages

Xcalak is quiet but not boring. Remember this section of the guide when you're on the beach wondering what to do.

Over the next few pages we list all the fun things to do. On the beach. On the water. And around town. We've even included the day-trips from Xcalak.

To keep the guide brief, we've only *highlighted* these activities. For full details go to the Ultimate Activities List at <http://xcalakmexico.com/things-to-do-in-xcalak/>

## On the Beach

On Xcalak's beaches you'll notice a lack of vendors, beachside bars, and noisy tourists.

## On the Water

The water around Xcalak is part of a protected Marine Reef Park.

## In Town & On the Beach Road

Discover Xcalak Village and the surrounding area.



watch the  
sunrise

swing in a  
hammock

become a  
bird watcher

stargaze

beachcomb  
for natural  
treasure

relax by the  
beach

make a  
conch shell  
horn

enjoy a beer

# On the Beach

race hermit  
crabs

learn to husk a  
coconut

gather sea  
beans

beachcomb  
for man-  
made  
treasure

watch the  
weather  
change

walk the  
dog

practice night  
photography

eat  
(extremely)  
fresh  
coconut

reuse  
washed-up  
flip flops

improve your  
suntan



## fly fish

In Xcalak you can catch barracuda, tarpon, snook, bonefish, or permit. Bring your own gear, arrange a guide, or take fly fishing lessons in this pristine, saltwater fly fishing paradise.

## snorkel

The sandy sea-bottom around Xcalak is shallow, and dotted with colorful coral heads full of tropical fish. Grab a snorkel and get familiar with the citizens of the reef.

## sea kayak

Take a kayak out to explore the coral heads and enjoy the blue water. If it's not windy, you can get up close to the barrier reef itself.



## swim

The clear water beckons no matter what time of day. In the evening, take a cold cervesa with you out into the waves and have a seat on the sandy bottom. The sun-warmed water is like a natural hot tub.

## Scuba dive

Diving the second largest barrier reef in the world is a treat, especially with small groups and single-tank dives. Featuring arches, crevasses, and schools of enormous tarpon.

## stand-up paddleboard

A mix between surfing and kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) is a total body workout. An energizing way to enjoy the calm waters around Xcalak.

# Around Town

## visit the 5 lighthouses

There are 3 lighthouses in town, a light-tower at 11.7 mi (18.8 km) up the north beach road, and a crumbling lighthouse at La Aguada.

## drive to La Aguada

We recommend the 5.6 mi (9 km) drive to the ferry crossing at La Aguada (currently not in service). Take a walk out on the massive concrete pier that extends into the immensely blue Bay of Chetumal.

## climb the coral stone pyramid

We're not sure if the myth about a squatter building the pyramid is true or not, but there's still an impressive pyramid of coral stones on the beach road at 11.4 mi (km 18.4).

## try moonshine and craft beer

Roll in to Costa de Cocos for their homebrew. Try a glass of one of their original brews: Tarpon Pale Ale, Costa Maya Sunrise Amber Ale, Permit Me 1 Porter, or mango moonshine.

## bike the North Beach Road

The first half has beach hotels, expat homes, and isolated beaches. At 15 mi (km 24) is a failed beach resort, and then the burnt out Rio Huatch Bridge.

## explore lagoons

Take a kayak, go explore the mangroves, birdwatch, or just play around. Don't forget mosquito repellent. By the way, crocodiles have been spotted... so skip the swimming.

## visit the town pier

Built in 1995, take a walk out to join the locals fishing in the translucent water. Watch them defend their catch from persistent pelicans and seagulls.

# Day-Trips from Xcalak

## **Scuba at Banco Chinchorro**

Banco Chinchorro is remote, protected, and only accessible with special permits (and a long boat ride). If you're a diver, getting there should be on your to-do list – there's 600 sq mi of pristine coral and over 200 wrecks.

## **visit nearby Mahahual**

In Mahahual you'll find a very different vibe than Xcalak. The town features touts, sellers, and vendors as well as amenities like grocery stores, restaurants, an ATM, car rentals, and even a Mayan-themed water park.

## **cruise to Bird Island**

Nature lovers will enjoy a tour of Bird Island in the Bay of Chetumal. The trip takes you through mangrove canals, to an island completely inhabited by avians.

## **spend a day in Bacalar**

About a 2 hour drive from Xcalak, the town of Bacalar is famous for its lagoon, the "lake of seven colors". While you're there, visit San Felipe fortress and a freshwater cenote.

## **explore ruins at Chacchoben and Kohunlich**

A worthwhile day trip from Xcalak, Chacchoben Ruins is 2 hours away, while Kohunlich Ruins are 5 hours away. Plan an overnight stay in Bacalar or Chetumal, to take in both sites.



# 6. Resources

9 pages

This is the last section of the guide. Sad. I know.

And it's a doozy of a section:

- 2 full pages of **insider tips** – things you'll be glad to know *before* you go
- The all-important packing list – because there are things you can't buy in Xcalak
- The brief history of Xcalak (but only the exciting stuff)
- A step-by-step guide to hosting your own **HERMIT CRAB RACE**
- A list of YouTube **videos**, to show you Xcalak – what there is to do, sights you'll see, and even how to pronounce "Xcalak"



# Insider Tips

## Green Angels

If your car breaks down on highway 307, fear not! A fleet of green tow trucks regularly plies the highway aiding those in need. These government-funded "Green Angels" help motorists in distress any way they can, free of charge.

## Ordering pizza from Coco's

It's possible to order a pizza from Coco's (Friday is pizza night!) and have it delivered to your accommodation. **Note:** be sure to tip the driver a fee proportionate to the distance travelled.

## Water and ice

On your own at a private property? At the Xcalak Water Company in town you can exchange, refill, or get new water jugs and load up on ice for your day's catch or keeping cervezas cold.

## Hitchhikers

If you drive the beach road, you may see some poor souls walking to or from town. These locals rely on kind hearts like yours to get them from A to B. Stopping for them is a good deed.

## KM 5 hot sauce

When you turn off highway 307 towards Mahahual, the km markers let you know when you're at km 5. There, you'll find a hot sauce factory with a buffet of flavors all made from produce grown on site. A worthwhile stop, where you can try different tasty sauces before you buy.

# ...more insider tips

## **Sargasso grass**

Depending on the season, the beach in Xcalak could be inundated with a green, stinky mess. Sargasso grass washes to the Caribbean shore where it can build up. Your accommodation will clean the Sargasso grass from the beach, but if you take a walk up the coast you'll see plenty.

## **Ropes on the beach road**

To prevent speeding, many accommodations have laid thick ropes across the beach road near their property to slow traffic down (like "topes" or speedbumps). This works on 4-wheeled vehicles, but motorcycles usually find a way around...

## **Creepie crawlies (geckos, scorpions, and snakes oh my!)**

You won't find many animals living on the sand, but you'll definitely see geckos in your room no matter where you stay. Don't worry, they're the good guys – they eat mosquitos.

Scorpions aren't unheard of though, and they're not so nice. Their sting isn't poisonous, but it will hurt. Avoid walking around the beach at night without a light to check what's at your feet.

There aren't many snakes on the beach, but you may find them in the jungle. They're mostly harmless, but it's best to be aware and stay out of their way.



# Xcalak Packing List

Xcalak is remote, and you need to be prepared. This section lists what you should bring with you.

**Note:** The best place to get groceries on the way to Xcalak is in **Tulum**. There are 2 grocery stores:

- **San Francisco de Asis**, on the right as you enter the town
- **Chedraui (recommended)**, turn left after you enter town and you'll see it on the left

## Mahahual

The closest town to Xcalak is Mahahual (or Mahajual), approximately a 1-hour drive from Xcalak. A cruise ship port, Mahahual has plenty of souvenir stores, restaurants, and shops catering to the many temporary visitors.

At the local grocery stores you can buy produce, and canned and dried goods. You can also peruse waterfront shops for beach clothing, bathing suits, snorkel equipment, and other necessities for Xcalak (like booze).

If you're craving some civilization after spending time in Xcalak, Mahahual might be just what you need. Indulge in beach activities, push your way through crowded streets, or visit the cheesy Mayan-themed water park.

## Food You Need to Bring

- milk
- natural yogurt
- packaged cheese
- breakfast cereal (for grown ups)
- bread
- packaged meat (hot dogs, bacon)
- condiments (ketchup, mustard, etc)
- snacks (granola bars, etc)
- packaged snack food
- booze (beer and liquor)

## Things You Don't Need

This is the opposite of the packing list. Here are things you should NOT bring with you to Xcalak.

- hair dryer
- curling iron
- jeans
- high heels
- jewelry
- raincoat
- wheelee luggage
- bad attitude

## Things You Need to Bring

- |                      |                        |                 |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| ◦ sunblock           | ◦ snorkel mask (maybe) | ◦ flashlight    |
| ◦ mosquito repellent | ◦ snorkel (maybe)      | ◦ flip flops    |
| ◦ bathing suits      | ◦ fins (maybe)         | ◦ water shoes   |
| ◦ hat                | ◦ camera               | ◦ running shoes |
| ◦ sunglasses         | ◦ pesos                | ◦ roadmap       |

# History of Xcalak

## In the beginning

Around 200 B.C., on the Yucatan's southern coast, Mayan traders brought their dugout canoes to shore through 2 natural openings in the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest barrier reef.

They named their new settlement "Xcalak", meaning "the twins" (named for the 2 reef openings).

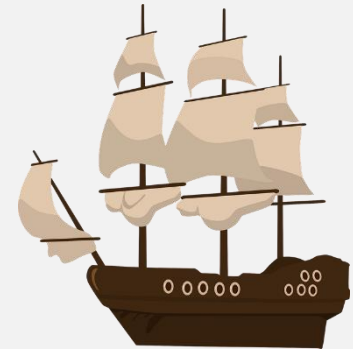
Thus began the history of Xcalak.

## Strangers arrive from across the sea

Things went well for the Mayans until the 1500s, when the Spanish arrived to plunder their gold.

Then the British arrived to plunder the *Spanish* ships (much to the bittersweet satisfaction of the Mayans).

At this point, the waters around Xcalak weren't really supervised by anyone. Xcalak became popular with pirates, Mayan rebels, and people seeking anonymity.



## Mexico becomes a country

In 1821, Mexico became a country and a border with Belize was established 6 miles south of Xcalak.

Spanish settlers were still bossing the Mayans around and the Mexican Caste War ensued.



## The glory days...that didn't last

The war ended in 1915, and by the 1950s Xcalak's #1 occupation was exporting coconuts. At this time, Xcalak had a movie theater, a billiards hall, and electricity (yay progress!).

Unfortunately, 5 years later Hurricane Janet wiped out ALL OF Xcalak. The town was decimated. It became a fishing village once again.

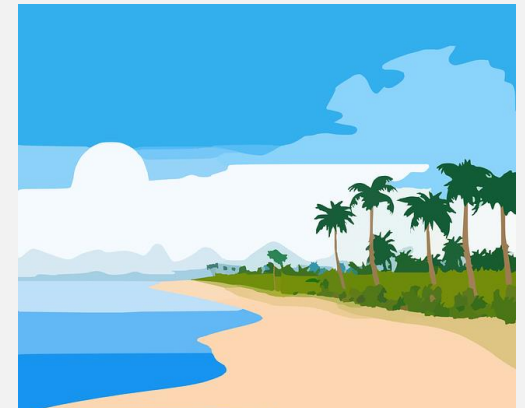


## Off the beaten path

In the late 1980s a road to Xcalak was built, and travelers arrived, discovering Xcalak's excellent fly fishing and pristine beauty. The first hotels were established, and Xcalak's tourism industry was born.

## Today

Xcalak's coast is protected from development (so it doesn't become another Playa del Carmen), while the Marine Reef Park allows sea life to flourish.





# Hosting a Hermit Crab Race

Want to hold your own Xcalak hermit crab race? It's easy!

## You'll need:

- bucket
- rake
- rope
- hermit crabs (obviously)

## Steps:

1. Collect 3 or more "participants" in a bucket (so they don't escape)
2. Make a racetrack: draw a circle with a rake on a flat, sandy surface
3. Encircle the racetrack with a rope to make the boundary
4. Upend your participants into the center of your racetrack
5. Watch the excitement of the race unfold!

## Winner – first hermit crab to cross the boundary rope

*One or two races, then let them go. Have fun, but don't torture the hermit crabs.*



# Videos

We didn't relax the \*whole\* time we were in Xcalak. We made these short videos which aren't just entertaining and helpful, they're educational too!



[Where to go? Mahahual or Xcalak](#)



[2 Minute Tour of Xcalak Village](#)



[6 Facts About Xcalak in 1 Minute](#)



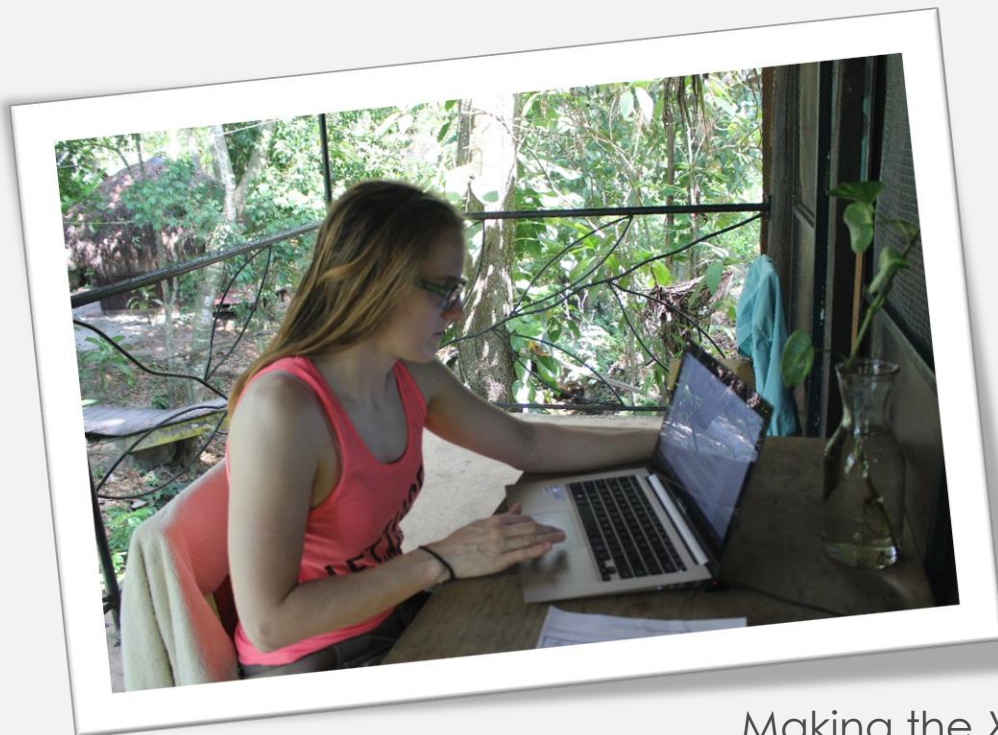
[How to Pronounce Xcalak](#)



[Getting to Xcalak Mexico](#)



[Make Your own Conch Shell Horn](#)



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Making the *Xcalak Travel Guide* has been a great adventure. So from us to you – thank you.

The XcalakMexico website started as a small idea. Something to fill our time. But it grew.

And soon we were helping lots of people. And that's when we *truly* fell for this small town in the south of Mexico.

Sincerely, we hope you fall for Xcalak too. It's an enchanting place.

~Heather & Tim