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Mother-Son Fun in Riviera Maya, Mexico

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Where to stay, what to do and what to eat with your family in Riviera Maya, Mexico.,

By [Judy Koutsky](#) December 11, 2017

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As a travel writer, I'm on the road with my kids quite a bit, but one of the things I always try and do each year is take each one of my boys on a solo trip with mom. That way, they get my full attention and I can really focus on the interests of that child. My 8-year-old son was learning all about Mexico in third grade, so it made sense that his mom-son trip would be south of the border.

Where to Stay

One of the biggest decisions when traveling is finding a hotel or resort that has plenty of kid-friendly activities and restaurants, but also appeals to adults (and for me, that means a great spa). The [Fairmont Mayakoba, Riviera Maya](#) is nestled in the heart of Riviera Maya and offers plenty of active adventure. The property is spread out, with individual casitas (small houses) located around the lagoon and beach. Due to the size, they offer free bike rentals, so families can bike to various spots around the property as well as to the beach and nature trail. We spent a good chunk of our time on the bikes (including taking a bike tour on the nature trails where we saw a cenote, lots of mangroves, iguanas, and birds). My son and I both love biking, so this was definitely one of the highlights of our stay here.



What to Eat

The restaurants on the property were also really good. While my son did love the chopped steak from the kid's menu, I had him order from the adult menu for most of the trip so he could try new things; he loved the duck tacos, truffle fries, short ribs, mole pork, sushi, and miso cod. I was surprised at the variety of dishes at the restaurant; while we ate most of our meals on the property, we never got bored with the choices. La Laguna had an amazing breakfast buffet each morning (including my favorite refried beans and cheese quesadillas), while El Puerto had Asian dishes (including sushi), and Brisas had ocean views and fresh catches of the day.

Before each meal, the server would ask about allergies, as they really cater to kids (and adults) with gluten and other sensitivities. We saw tons of kids on the property, and it's not surprising considering that kids younger than 5 eat free (if they are with their parents and ordering from the kids' menu—which had a nice selection of kid-favorites like pizza and chicken nuggets, as well as area cuisine like quesadillas and local juices).



What to Do

We are an active family, so we took advantage of the resort's many offerings including a catamaran tour, an ecology lagoon boat tour, snorkeling, kayaking, paddle boarding, and, of course—plenty of swimming. One afternoon, while I enjoyed the spa, my son had fun at the resort's Discovery Club & Adventure Camp, where he made a piñata (and of course got tons of Mexican candy when it broke open), took a cooking class where they made their own burritos and tacos, and took nature walks.

There are five pools on the property. My son loved the main pool, which featured a slide and swim-up bar (he had plenty of piñatas, aka virgin pina coladas), while I really enjoyed the beach-front infinity pool, which was heated and overlooked the Caribbean Sea. When we weren't biking around the property or eating, we were in a pool or at the beach looking for seashells.

Where to Go: Day Trips

I highly recommend visiting the Ruinas de Coba. Skip the crowds that hit Chichén Itza and Tulum and instead head to another set of Mayan ruins, this one smack dab in the middle of the jungle. (As an added bonus, unlike Chichén Itza and Tulum, you can

climb Coba's pyramid.) You can bike or walk around the grounds (we chose to bike). For those adventurous spirits, plan to hike up the Nohuch Mul pyramid at Coba. It's no small feat, as it's the tallest Mayan structure in the Yucatan and the steps are uneven and wobbly (there's a rope for assistance), but the view from the top is amazing. After biking to the pyramid, Jack and I climbed to the top (it's pretty steep, but well worth it for the views).

The second part of our tour included a Mayan blessing (performed by a Mayan healer), a canoe ride, zip lining, and climbing down a ladder to a cenote (an underground tunnel) where we swam in the cool, crystal-clear water. This excursion is a full-day adventure including plenty of culture.

Another good day trip is to Xel-ha. A lot of people recommended this place and I was curious to see if it lived up to the hype. It's a water park built into the natural surroundings. We went swimming in cenotes (the Yucatán peninsula has more cenotes than anywhere else in the world); tubing along the mangroves; zip lining in the water; zooming down a slightly terrifying (in my opinion) water slide; ate plenty of Mexican food and international specialties, and had an overall great day.

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