

INSIGHT *MEXICO INSIGHT*

Five Mexico destinations to watch in 2022

By Meagan Drillinger   | Jan 12, 2022



Meagan Drillinger

For most destinations around the world, the pandemic delivered a swift and decisive kick to the tourism gut. For Mexico, while the initial drop-off was immediate and devastating, the nation was able to rebound its tourism industry to not only recoup the losses but invest for growth, as well. With \$7 billion dollars of foreign investment pouring in, Mexico was able to continue to develop its tourism destinations as well as home in on new markets for repeat and intrepid travelers. Here are the five destinations in Mexico to watch in 2022.

Southern Quintana Roo

The first time I visited Mahahual in 2017, I had a feeling that the sleepy beach village near the border of Belize would become a bigger deal before too long. Why wouldn't it? The beaches south of Tulum, along the Costa Maya, are just as epic as the ones closer to Tulum, except they are far less populated. Here the focus is on ecotourism, as much of the coast is protected within the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve.

My predictions were met with cautious optimism, as lack of direct flights to the state's capital city, Chetumal, from the U.S. were lacking. But all of that changed in December with the arrival of a new nonstop flight to Chetumal from Miami. Chetumal is the gateway to southern Quintana Roo and places like Mahahual and the nearby Magical Town of Bacalar. It's early in the game, but with the opening of luxury lifestyle and design hotels in the area, the inevitable upward trajectory of tourism development is gaining momentum.

Isla Holbox

In the opposite direction, far north of Cancun, is the island of Holbox. For years, Holbox was Mexico's best-kept Caribbean island secret. The car-free island is accessible via a short boat ride from the mainland town of Chiquila. Once on the island, bohemian

backpackers were exposed to a quiet world of picture-perfect beaches, crystal-clear water, boutique hotels and yoga retreats.

Things are changing, though -- and fast. The island has already seen the opening of the Mystique Holbox by Royalton, A Tribute Portfolio Resort, part of the Marriott family of hotels. It is also expecting its first all-inclusive resort in early 2022. St. Somewhere Resort Punta Coco, Holbox Island, a Karisma resort will open in early 2022 as part of Karisma's new collection of casual-luxury boutique hotels. This will be the first location for the brand. It will feature 39 suites.

Yucatan

We cannot mention destinations to watch in Mexico without giving a nod to the state of Yucatan, which hosted the (thrice postponed) Tianguis Turistico event back in November. The event was the first large-scale tourism conference to be held since the outbreak of the pandemic, and it turned thousands of eyes toward this still-under-the-radar state on the Yucatan peninsula.

The energy pulsing at the event was centered on the Mayan train, which is a project launched by President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. The project, while postponed due to the pandemic, is most definitely full steam ahead, with the first leg expected to be up and running by sometime this year. Yucatan will be among the first destinations to have train stops on the line that are open. These stops will bring more tourism to the capital city of Merida as well as to archeological sites like Uxmal.

But Yucatan will also be showing off its coastline along the Gulf of Mexico. Dubbed the Yucatan Riviera, this calm stretch of beach will be populated by eco-conscious, small-scale resorts, boutique hotels and locally owned restaurants and shops. The coastline is anchored by the port town of Progreso, which already has invested in its cruise port and malecon.

Costalegre

Mexico's central Pacific coast has long been dominated by Puerto Vallarta and Punta Mita. While these destinations continue to introduce new offerings with many developments coming in 2022, the destination to watch here is Costalegre.

Stretching for nearly 200 miles between Puerto Vallarta and Manzanillo, this wild and rugged coastline has been on the map for luxury travelers in the know who have flocked to coastal jewels like Careyes and Cuixmala, among others. Developers with keen eyes have had their sights on this coastline for years, with promises of a better highway, a new airport and luxury developments always in the chatter. Financial setbacks and the pandemic, however, kept postponing these anticipated openings. But 2022 may actually see rumors come to fruition with the opening of the Four Seasons Tamarindo, opening in April, as well as a new luxury development, Xala, which has already started opening in phases.

Baja California Sur

Baja California Sur does not need any help with tourism. Home to Los Cabos, it is one of the most important tourist destinations in the country. But travelers are looking farther afield even in the most familiar places, and it's the outlying towns and communities of Baja California Sur that are going to be getting a lot more attention.

On the Pacific Coast, there is Todos Santos. This once sleepy, bohemian town sits two hours north of Cabo San Lucas. Over the past few decades, it was known for its dirt roads, mysticism and as a haven for artists and backpackers. But its reputation has been growing, bringing boutique luxury hotels, fabulous restaurants and high-end beach clubs, fusing that boho vibe with the high-end and chic.

On the Sea of Cortez side sits the capital of Baja California Sur, La Paz. This beautiful city by the sea is often thought of as the sleepier sister to Los Cabos. Overlooking the sea, the city is certainly growing its reputation and popularity. Last year, Grupo Habita opened a 32-room hotel out of a restored colonial villa. The hotel features a spa, pool and rooftop bar. Coming this year, Chable will open its Sea of Cortez property just outside of La Paz, with 50 units, a spa, restaurants and an event space.

Not far from La Paz is the eco-destination of Loreto, which started receiving direct flights from Dallas in 2020 through American Airlines. Loreto is the home base from which to explore the Loreto Bay National Marine Park, which is a protected area comprising the Bay of Loreto, the Sea of Cortez and part of Baja California Sur.