

By Marci Mannis, Travel Editor



# Cancun

## A Fabulous, Family Friendly Getaway

When I think of Cancun, Mexico my thoughts take me back to the fall of 2004 –a girls’ weekend of fun in the sun, escaping for a moment from all the wonderful responsibilities of mommyville. If you would have told me back then, as I was sipping a margarita in one hand and holding a book in another, that my next trip to this bustling city of tequila, chips and salsa would be with my 11 year old daughter, I would have tried to convince you otherwise!

Now, we all know that Moms are never wrong...but in this case I was. Cancun is a city so rich in culture that 5 days with my daughter Breanna, this past April, was not nearly enough time to experience all that this incredible family (yes, family!) destination has to offer. This side of the Caribbean Sea deserves a high ranking on the list of possible destinations to choose for a family trip.

Our 1st day was a guided tour of Crococoan Park—a hands-on zoo like no other. Viewing animals specific to this region was not only fascinating but educational. We then moved on down the road to Xcaret Park. This most amazing eco-archeological theme park is located directly on the coast at the site of an ancient settlement. The park features countless activities to fill up your day, only to end with a spectacular night per-

formance and equestrian show.

Our 2nd day of the trip we boarded a large boat for a 25 minute excursion across the sea to Garrafón Park on Isla Mujeres. This island features snorkeling, scuba, sea treks and a Zip Line over the ocean. After docking, we strolled through the Museo de Arte Popular. This folk art museum holds some of the most coveted collector’s pieces from Mexico’s colorful history. The museum offers a 1 hour audio tour for only \$5.00. This is where Breanna picked out her Mexican Keepsake from the trip – a present her I was thrilled to pack in the luggage.

Our 3rd day was, as Breanna so eloquently put it; “a day to just chill out at the beach!” There was little chilling... just a lot of baking in the sun. Our accommodations offered all the amenities that any family could ask for, including a Kid’s Club that was available at the Hotel Casa Magna. Breanna, however, choose to “hang with her hip mom” for the day. We decided that the next trip to Cancun would include a Spa Day at the award-winning adjacent hotel, The JW Marriott. They are currently working on a special Teen Spa as well. That day will come soon-



er than later for me! Later that evening we took a jaunt over to the La Isla Shopping Village. This outdoor shopping and entertainment complex featured an Interactive Aquarium, shops, restaurants and various other activities. Heaven forbid that my daughter and I go four days without a shopping mall in sight! Some things in life will never change.

Our 4th day was the highlight of the trip for both of us. The Selvatura Tour was a day of adventure. Breanna was in her element zip lining through the jungle with her mother not far behind her. Over miles of terrain to cover we became masters of this thrilling sport. After working up a sweat high up in the trees, we then mountain biked to a Cenote and zip lined into the water for a little cooling off! I felt a bit like Tarzan with my daughter watching me in awe! I felt energized and so free out in the elements of the Mexican Jungle. The day truly held a magical feeling. We were exhausted by the time we came back to our hotel, but not enough to miss our last adventure of the trip. On our final evening in Cancun we boarded a large Pirate Ship dubbed the “Captain Hook” and sailed out to sea for the evening! The lobster and steak dinner was almost as good as the fun filled show the Crew of Pirates put on for their shipmates. The mix of children, parents and seniors from all over the world made this excursion extra special.

Coming home is always bittersweet – back to the reality of life. That is why vacationing is so special; it reminds you that life isn’t always about the day to day grind. Our children grow up so quickly in front of our eyes. The four days my daughter and I spent together in another country was easy, non-stressful and so incredibly bonding. This family trip to Cancun was truly an experience that I would repeat over and over with Breanna. So now when I think about Mexico, it is not about the tequila, chips and salsa ... it is about family time. Simply stated – GO TO MEXICO! – where it seems every day is Dia del Niño-The Day of the Child.

### Things to know before you go;

- Parents traveling alone with their child will need a notarized letter from the other parent.
- Parents will need a passport and children will need an official birth certificate.
- Bring a bottle of sunscreen for each child and each adult traveling – you can’t have enough protection from the intense sun!
- Most of the major hotels have filtered water, however, I still recommend drinking bottled water. It is not worth the risk on your system.
- Pre-plan some of your excursions, otherwise you will be out of luck if they are sold out!
- Check with the beach patrol daily on the status of jellyfish in the sea. They will sting and it is not pleasant! I can attest to that. It does make for a good story though!

### Resources

- Xcaret:  
[www.xcaret.com](http://www.xcaret.com)
- Garrafón:  
[www.garrafon.com](http://www.garrafon.com)
- Hotel Casa Magna:  
[www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)
- JW Marriott:  
[www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)
- La Isla Shopping Village:  
[www.laislacancun.com.mx](http://www.laislacancun.com.mx)
- Interactive Aquarium:  
[www.laislacancun.com.mx](http://www.laislacancun.com.mx)
- Selvatura Tour:  
[www.selvatura.com.mx](http://www.selvatura.com.mx)

