

## Ecotour

Contributed by Administrator  
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Sian Ka'an (Maya for "Where the sky is born") was established as a biosphere reserve in 1986 and incorporated into UNESCO's list of natural world heritage sites in 1987. Adjacent to its southern border, the area for protection of flora and Fauna UYAMIL was established in 1994. Covering together over 1.5 million acres along the central coast of the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico, they comprise one of the largest protected areas in Mexico. The Sian Kaan reserve is composed equally of semi evergreen tropical forest, wetlands and savannas, and marine habitat with coral reefs. Sian Ka'an is home to more than 345 species of birds, including over one million wintering migratory song birds from the U.S. and Canada and the rare Jabiru Stork. All of the endangered cat species of southern Mexico are found in Sian Ka'an, including jaguar, puma, ocelot, margay and the jaguarundi, along with spider and howler monkeys, white-tipped and collared peccary and tapir. The wetlands and marine habitats shelter the endangered Morelet's and American crocodile as well as manatee and provides habitat for the green, loggerhead, hawksbill and leatherback sea turtles. Small dolphins groups swim, feed and reproduce in Ascension and Espiritu Santo Bay. Two large Bays, Ascension and Espiritu Santo Bay and a unique fresh water wetland system and 60 miles of pristine coral reef is the enduring landscape used by the ancient Maya civilization over two thousand years ago, as attested to by the remains of approximately 27 Maya sites found within the reserve. Fly fishing and wild life observation tours are today transforming the fishing boats into tourism boats as well as inhabitants tourism income has become the first source for the Villages, displacing commercial lobster fishing. Reserve Managers and Fishing Lodges made an effort to prevent netting, we offered to double the number of jobs and started our two guides per boat program, using head guide and apprentice, increasing the benefit for both anglers and local kids opportunities. Only a short boat ride from Pesca Maya we can reach the ancient Mayan city of Muyil, a beautiful site with very few visitors. This site goes under two names, Muyil and Chunyaxche. It is not big, but there are a few interesting buildings and the historical significance is apparent. Muyil is a Post classic city, which means it is contemporary or a little earlier than Tulum. Most of the buildings on the site date back to 1100-1200 AD. There is no doubt that this was an important trading post for the for the Post classic Maya, thereby playing a significant roll in the developments during this era. During this time of Mayan history, trading flourished and became more extensive, both in volume and distance. The technique of building large sea-going canoes were refined and international exchange increased. We know Muyil served as a trading post, because of its location. It is constructed very close to a couple of lagoons, Laguna Muyil and Laguna Chunyaxche, which provide a protected port. The lagoons are connected with each other and with Boca Paila on the coast through a 24 km long canal. The canal is built right through the nature reserve Sian Kaan, with wetlands and mangrove. It was constructed by the ancient Maya, and it is maintained by their descendents of today. About halfway down the canal is a small, unrestored Mayan ruin. This was most likely a point of security and/or customs where out-of-town merchants had to state their purpose. Ancient paved roads, called Sacbe, can also be found on this site. Their unrestored appearance shows the force of the jungle beneath. One of them, logically, leads to the lagoon that would have been the entrance for most visitors 800 years ago. ECO-TOURS WITH PESCA MAYA We have prepared different adventures: Our local guides will drive through this ecosystems, not only introducing you to these creatures, but also telling you about their story. "To know is to love, to love is to preserve". Make sure you bring the best camera possible and video camera! You will have opportunities for great pictures!

1. Dolphin Encounters We will go by boat searching for wild bottle nose dolphins, they are the most charismatic and interesting animals, in my very personal opinion. There is a group living permanently in Sian Ka'an. Through 12 years of operation we have found that they would come to see us in the same place almost every time, not for food, but curiosity. Sometimes they are watching us without us watching them, remember they have an ultrasound sense that allows them to see miles away in the water, like our eyes in the air, while our visibility might be between 10 and 30 feet in the area where they usually are. Same day we will look for caguama and white turtle. Humans are very spooky to them, wonder why? Well, we are a natural predator. They don't really trust the "ecotour" yet.

During the tour we'll have many opportunities for bird watching. In the middle of Ascension Bay we will stop at the frigate nesting mangle. Here we will have the opportunity to see these birds in their sexual flirting and nesting, we might as well see pelican, bobo, cormorant and other species. Flamingo, spoonbill, eagles, parrots and herons are common to find. At the end of the trip we will stop at one of the colourful reefs to observe tropical fish and other aquatic species.

2. Manatee Adventure / Muyil Ruins This peaceful and quite lovely animal is in risk of extinction. Hundreds of them used to swim in Sian Ka'an waters, today only a few of them survived the human hunting in the 20th century. In the biosphere preserve they are strongly protected by the government. No touching is allowed, they are very shy. Encounter possibilities are lower than dolphins, but within their area we might find dolphins, too. On our adventurous journey through mangrove channels and lagoons we will reach the ancient comercial village of "MUYIL". After our tour through the jungle we will pass by an old Mayan lighthouse that was used to help the canoes travelling between Yucatan and Honduras, trading salt and other products from the valleys with goods from the mountains. At the end of the day we will stop to swim in a sweet water river.

3. Snorkeling Excursions

There are many opportunities to discover the underwater world. Snorkeling is one of the easiest, safest and most delightful to explore the aquatic wilderness. For those who have snorkeled once or twice in the past, maybe you just put your mask on and jump in the water and for the next 40 minutes you are more busy trying to be comfortable, than

actually looking at the show. With a few tips and little practice I have seen almost anyone become a competent snorkeler. We will give you a personalized training to make sure you can relax and enjoy. The aim of our program is not only to admire whatever is there, but to learn one or two things about it. During the week we will be looking for a number of species to get a good photo collection.

Schedule for ecotours TOURTIME: 5 to 6 hours, starting at 8:30 AM and ends 01:30 PM  
aproximately RATES: Dolphins: US\$ 275.00 per boat with a maximum of 5 passengers.  
Muyil: US\$ 430.00 per boat with a maximum of 5 passengers. Rate includes 1 liter of bottled purified water and 2 sodas per person. If you would like to arrange a day-trip from Cancun / Riviera Maya / Tulum to Sian Ka'an, please refer to: WILD DOLPHIN ENCOUNTER See more pictures about our Eco-Tours in the GALLERY