

# How to do Tulum Properly: Tips for an Awesome First Trip

It seems that every year Tulum is getting more and more popular as a destination not only for those seeking yoga and vegan food on the beach, but for those looking to discover something other than nearby Cancun and its endless clubs.

This is a quick guide as to what you should (and shouldn't do) while in Tulum so that you can get the most out of this unique spot down in the Riviera Maya.

- 1. Where to stay:** Your best bet is actually to stay just a little bit north of Tulum town, in the area of Riviera Maya. My hotel of preference is the UNICO which is an all inclusive and VERY NEW (as of early 2018) hotel with stunning rooms, some of the most delicious all-inclusive meals you've ever had, and service that is on par with some of the best 5-star resorts in the world. However, if you do choose to stay somewhere else, just know that it's not necessary to stay within the actual town of Tulum as many of the resorts just north of it are within 15 minutes of taxi rides and will often offer better rates and larger accommodations – a win-win in my book.



The Unico 2087, it's every bit as nice as it looks.

- 2. What to Do:** There's three main things to do in Tulum. There's obviously more than that, but the first is to visit the old Mayan ruins. Now, normally I don't like tourist traps, but the Mayan Ruins are certainly worth seeing and so unique to this area of the world and so well preserved that they're definitely worth a visit. Just know that during the middle of the day there is ZERO shade and it gets quite hot. I would recommend using a tour guide from your hotel or a local service as they know the quickest routes in and out of the place to make the whole experience a bit more fulfilling. The second thing you want to do in Tulum is just browse the actual town of Tulum. The main "row" is essentially a quaint one street town with a road and palm trees overhanging it. On both sides there's hotels, stores, and a ton of shopping. You could easily spend a few hours just perusing this area and going in and out of spots. Many of the hotels here are worth visiting just for a few hours for a meal or for a day fee to use their "beach clubs". Of particular note worth visiting is

Habitas.



This is the main street. Stroll it.

- 3. Cenotes:** The third thing everyone must do is visit a Cenote (or a few). These are essentially natural water sinkholes which double as swimming holes and are specific to this region of Mexico. These are amazing for their crystal clear water and incredible diversity of fish and turtles just hanging out. There are a TON of Cenotes in Tulum but there's one in particular that is definitely worth visiting and it is called the "Cenote Dos Ojos". Now there's a bit more to this – when you visit Cenote Dos Ojos be sure to take the ride towards the back of the Cenote park and explore the myriad of Cenotes that are beyond just the initial one at the entrance. Most people make the mistake of just going to the first one they see and miss out on exploring the more intricate caves that are deeper into the Cenote Park at Dos Ojos.
- 4. Where to Eat:** Tulum is very much a food destination, with some calling it a rival to Mexico City, because of Chef's like Rene Redzepi and Eric Werner who have

created pop up culinary feasts in this beach town. There's a heavy focus on wood-fired foods, local seafood, and Yucetecan inspired cuisine with Mexican influence. Keep in mind, the food here is NOT truly Mexican, and I say that in a good way, because it has its own unique flavor and style. There are quite a few restaurants that one could argue are worth visiting here in Tulum, but the two which I highly recommend are Hartwood and Kin Toh. Hartwood is an original and known for being one of the original high-end wood-fired restaurants – serving locally sourced ceviche and legendary pork ribs. Kin Toh is the place to go if you want equal parts entertainment to equal parts cuisine. Located in the Azulik hotel, this restaurant is situated in a treehouse, something straight out of Swiss Family Robinson or Tarzan with stunning skybridges, tables nested above the nearby forest, and hammocks to lay around in – all 40 feet in the air. The food itself is gastronomic and seasonal, and should you wish to imbibe they even offer a hookah program with imported tobaccos. You'll want to spend a few hours here at sunset to lounge, relax, and eat and drink slowly.



This is Kin Toh. You'll want to spend a lot of time here.

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## **REVIEW: FOUR Restaurants you HAVE to try when visiting Los Angeles**

Food is an integral part of travel. Every time I travel to a new destination I feel that the best way to learn about the locals and the culture is to immerse yourself in the cuisine.

That being said, Los Angeles is a melting pot, being a metropolis with over 12 million people from every corner of Planet Earth. Truthfully, there are almost too many great restaurants in Los Angeles to narrow down to just four, so

rather than doing that, i've narrowed it down to four CATEGORIES of which i've given a few suggestions in each. Being a foodie and having ate at almost every single "top restaurant" in Los Angeles as rated by the Zagat List, i've had the pleasure of experiencing most of what the city has to offer. Sure, you could go on Yelp and look for restaurants, but sometimes those reviews just aren't accurate. Hopefully my experiences will help you choose where to grub in the delicious city of Angels. Without further ado, here goes my list:

## **ASIAN FOOD**

- **Din Tai Fung** – This one is a local dumpling house, with other sister locations around the world. It's been rated by many chefs such as Anthony Bourdain as one of their favorite restaurants in the **world**. Of course, you have to get the pork xia-long-bao. They're little morsels of juicy pork goodness steamed in their own broth in thin-skinned dumpling shells. Although there's locations in Orange County, Washington state, and Japan, China, and Taiwan, if you're in Los Angeles you should definitely check this place out.



They're pockets of heaven

- **Genwa Korean BBQ** – Coming to Los Angeles and not experience Korean BBQ is like going to ..well, China, and not having Chinese food. Los Angeles hosts the largest population of Korean expats outside of Korea, and their food is absolutely phenomenal. Genwa is an upscale version, and as is the case with all Korean BBQ, the highlight are the small appetizer plates which come with every meal, things such as kimchee, egg stew, sweet and sour potato. The meats are freshly cut and butchered in the back, and cooked for you on a hot plate with seasoned onions and garlic.



Korean bbq yumminess

- **Sugarfish** – This is one of my favorite sushi spots in Los Angeles. It's been rumored that California actually has more sushi restaurants than all of Japan. I wouldn't doubt this, and on any drive around LA you'll notice that there are dozens of Japanese sushi restaurants. Sugarfish happens to be a Los Angeles based chain, and they're known for their incredibly affordable prix fixe menus, served with impeccable service. Sure, there's a LOT of other sushi options, but you WONT find anything close in quality to Sugarfish



for reasonable prices of \$25-40 a person (that includes usually 8-12 pieces of sushi and a few handrolls).

## NEW AMERICAN

- **Providence** – This is a Los Angeles staple, and showcases everything you want to love about seafood. It's a michelin star restaurant with a 20 something course menu and some of the most innovative and delicious seafood you'll find in town. Make sure to plan a 3-4 hour course here as it takes a while. It's certainly one of the best places to check out Los Angeles fine dining.



Providence's decadent Uni dish

- **INK** – Michael Voltaggio's restaurant has enough press to make any restaurateur jealous, and it's all well deserved. Innovative dishes such as the aromatic salt covered charcoaled potatoes served with a side of reduced vinegar, or the luscious brown butter cooked egg filled gnocchi all make for a hedonistic meal. This is widely regarded as the vanguard of great cuisine in Los Angeles



They look a bit funky, but they certainly don't taste funky

## MEXICAN FOOD

- **Leo's Tacos** – Any visit to Los Angeles is incomplete without dropping by a taco truck. These are staples of the food community and Leo's is particularly delicious. There's TWO Leo's in Los Angeles, and the better one has been in the Eagle Rock neighborhood for well over 20 years (It's just 10 minutes north of Downtown Los Angeles), and the difference between their tacos/burritos and the rest is that they cook them "El Salvadorean" style, which is to say with a bit more moisture in the meat. The food is authentic here, and like all taco trucks, you order at the stand, then they serve it to you on a plate that you quickly finish on the side of the street. Yes, it's not tableside

maitre'd but it sure is delicious!

I hope you all enjoyed this article, and visit these amazing establishments!