



Brandeis | TRAVELERS

*Piramide del Adivino, Uxmal, Mexico*

# THE MAYA: HIDDEN WORLDS REVEALED

EXPLORING THE  
YUCATAN PENINSULA & CHIAPAS

Featuring *Charles Golden*,  
Professor of Anthropology & Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs

**December 12-21, 2026**

## Dear Alumni and Friends,

The Maya world spans five modern countries and more than three thousand years of civilization. It began with the earliest farmers of southern Mexico and Central America and flourished into a culture that built soaring pyramids and developed sophisticated systems of writing and mathematics unmatched in Mesoamerica. Today, beyond the legacy of their ancient cities, more than eight million Maya people continue to thrive in modern urban and rural communities, keeping over thirty Indigenous Mayan languages alive.

I invite you to join me on a custom-curated journey through the heart of the Maya world. Together, we will explore the latest archaeological discoveries and the spectacular pre-Columbian cities of Yucatán, Campeche, and Chiapas. We will admire the vivid murals of Bonampak hidden deep in the jungle, visit Lacanja Tzeltal, home to ongoing investigations and conservation by a Brandeis research team, and marvel at the intricate stone mosaic architecture of Uxmal and the elegant carved sculptures of Palenque. At Calakmul, we will wander among one of the largest royal cities of the ancient Maya, where towering pyramids rise above the lush jungle canopy. We will also explore unique sites such as Edzná, Becán, Chicanná, and Xpuhil.

This journey is more than a tour of ruins; it is an immersive experience that celebrates the living culture and enchanting spirit of southern Mexico. Savor the region's magnificent cuisine, discover its thriving arts scene, and admire the colonial architecture of Mérida and Campeche City. We will also venture into the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, a vast ecological sanctuary that stretches across three countries and protects one of the largest remaining tropical forests in the world.

As we travel, we will learn about ongoing efforts to protect the region's diverse and endangered wildlife, including the majestic jaguar. In partnership with local guides and experts, I look forward to deepening your understanding of both the ancient and modern Maya world, connecting history, archaeology, and contemporary life along the way.

Reserve your space online today by calling our tour operator, Criterion Travel, at 888-328-2089, or by emailing [res@criteriontravel.com](mailto:res@criteriontravel.com).

Sincerely,



Charles Golden  
Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs  
Professor of Anthropology

Scan me with your smart phone  
or tablet to register online



*Monkey in its natural habitat at  
Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, Mexico*

## HIGHLIGHTS:

Learn about Professor Golden's work in the Usumacinta River region with visits to Bonampak, Palenque, and Lacanja Tzeltal.

Delight in local crafts at the Sunday market in Mérida and enjoy a private visit to Joann Andrews' home and library, which houses a large private collection of Maya artifacts.

Explore the incredible stone mosaic architecture of Uxmal, and the spectacular sculpture of Palenque, among other gems of Maya architecture.

Visit the superb yet less traveled sites of Edzna, Becán, Chicanná, and Xpuhil. At Calakmul, see one of the largest of all royal cities of the ancient Maya, with towering pyramids soaring above the lush jungle canopy.

Explore the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, among the largest expanses of intact tropical forests in an ecological preserve spanning three countries.

Learn about efforts to sustain the region's diverse and endangered flora and fauna, including the majestic jaguar.

Local experts on the region's natural and cultural legacies will enrich your experience of the ancient and modern landscape.



# Brandeis Faculty Leader: Charles Golden



Charles Golden is a professor of anthropology and Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs whose archaeological research focuses on the dynamics of civilizations and the rise and fall of ancient states. Since 2003, he has led regional archaeological surveys and excavations in the Usumacinta River Valley, which forms much of the modern border between Mexico and Guatemala. His current investigations in Chiapas have helped to reveal new insights into the lives of the ancient Maya, and his research team identified the ancient capital of the Sak Tz'ì ("White Dog") kingdom, previously known only from hieroglyphic inscriptions. This work has been televised by Nature, National Geographic and Disney+, and featured in the New York Times and Brandeis Magazine. He has authored numerous publications on the ancient Maya and co-authored "Ancient Civilizations, 6th ed.," a worldwide survey of the origins of states and empires.







Maya stone relief at Palenque, Mexico

## ITINERARY:

**Saturday, December 12**

### Mérida, Mexico

Depart the U.S. and fly to Mérida, Mexico. Upon arrival, transfer to Hotel Rosas y Xocolate, a luxurious boutique property in the heart of the city. Take some time to settle in before joining your fellow travelers for a welcome dinner featuring the Yucatán's regional specialties, highlighting the vibrant flavors and culinary traditions of this historic city.

*Hotel Rosas y Xocolate (D)*

**Sunday, December 13**

### Mérida

After a morning welcome lecture, enjoy Sunday in Mérida, when the colonial city center is closed to auto traffic. Stroll around Plaza Grande, the city's principal gathering place, and visit the nearby colorful market where modern-day Maya sell vibrant hammocks, embroidered huipils, and traditional blouses. Learn about Mérida's colonial history at the Cathedral, Palacio Montejo, and Casa Museo Montes Molina. Continue to Parque Santa Lucía and its restaurants and lively atmosphere. Enjoy a private visit to Joann Andrews' home and library, which houses a large private collection of Maya artifacts. The rest of the afternoon and evening are free to enjoy Mérida at leisure.

*Hotel Rosas y Xocolate (B,L)*

**Monday, December 14**

### Campeche

Visit the late Classic Maya city of Uxmal, and examine the intricate carvings on the Pyramid of the Magician, whose unique rounded shape and steep staircase make it one of the most striking pyramids in the region. Behold the two-headed jaguar throne at the entrance to the Governor's

Palace, a remarkable example of Maya stonework and symbolism. Afterward, continue to the seaside colonial town of Campeche, a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its colorful fortifications, historic plazas, and charming streets.

*Hotel Plaza Campeche (B,L,D)*

**Tuesday, December 15**

### Campeche

Start the day at Campeche's museums, which showcase the city's colonial history, decorative arts, and Maya heritage. Enjoy lunch at the Hacienda Uayamon, a restored 17th-century estate offering traditional Yucatán cuisine in a historic setting. In the afternoon, visit the Edzna ruins, an important Classic Maya city featuring impressive ceremonial plazas, a towering acropolis, and hydraulic systems that reveal advanced engineering and urban planning. Return to Campeche for the evening, where you can relax and enjoy the hotel's comfortable accommodations and classic colonial style.

*Hotel Plaza Campeche (B,L,D)*



Palenque, a UNESCO World Heritage site



**Wednesday, December 16**

### Calakmul

Visit the Maya sites of Becán, Chicanná, and Xpuhil en route to Calakmul. Becán is notable for its defensive moats and towering structures, while Chicanná features exquisite Puuc-style stone mosaics and the iconic “House of the Painted Lintel.” Xpuhil is distinguished by its unusual three-level pyramid with multiple rounded platforms, a rare architectural style in the region. Settle in at the hotel, a new property located near the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve.  
*Hotel Tren Maya Calakmul (B,L,D)*

**Thursday, December 17**

### Calakmul

Explore the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, one of the largest and most ecologically diverse protected tropical forests in the Americas, home to jaguars, spider monkeys, and hundreds of bird species. Visit the archaeological site of Calakmul, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the most powerful ancient Maya cities, featuring towering pyramids, ceremonial plazas, and sprawling residential complexes hidden beneath the jungle canopy. Learn about ongoing conservation and archaeological research that preserves both the natural and cultural heritage of this remarkable region.  
*Hotel Tren Maya Calakmul (B,L,D)*

**Friday, December 18**

### Palenque

Drive to Palenque, arriving in the early afternoon, and visit the Alberto Ruz Lhuillier Palenque Museum, which houses artifacts and insights from the region’s renowned archaeological excavations, before checking into the hotel. Relax at Hotel Chan Kah, a charming property surrounded by lush jungle that offers comfortable accommodations and a peaceful setting.  
*Hotel Chan Kah (B,L,D)*

**Saturday, December 19**

### Palenque

Spend a full day at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palenque, one of the most important Maya sites in the world. Visit the Palenque ruins, including the Temple of Inscriptions, Temple of the Sun, and Temple of the Foliated Cross, which contains the most comprehensive sources of Maya texts known to exist. After dinner, enjoy a private, after-hours sunset tour of the site.  
*Hotel Chan Kah (B,L,D)*

**Sunday, December 20**

### Valle Escondido

Drive to Bonampak, a lesser-visited Maya site renowned

for its stunning series of rare polychromatic wall paintings. Study the battles and ceremonies depicted in vivid shades of blue, red, and yellow. Then visit Lacanja Tzeltal, the site of the capital of a kingdom known from Classic-period Maya inscriptions as Sak Tz’i’ (White Dog), before overnighting at the rustic Finca Valle Escondido.  
*Finca Valle Escondido (B,L,D)*

**Monday, Dec 21**

Transfer this morning to the Villahermosa airport for flights home. *(B)*

**December 9–12, 2026**

### Pre-Trip Extension to Tulum, Coba and Chichen Itzá

Begin in Tulum with a welcome dinner and visit its cliffside ruins overlooking the Caribbean Sea. Take a lagoon boat ride in the Sian Ka’an Biosphere Reserve, swim in Laguna Chunyaxche, and see the jungle-shrouded Muyil site. Explore the ancient roads and towering pyramids of Coba, stroll through Valladolid, and spend a full day at Chichen Itzá, visiting the Observatory, the Nunnery, the Tomb of the High Priest, and the great ball court. Conclude with a stop in the golden-hued colonial town of Izamal before arriving in Mérida to begin the main tour.







Mural at Bonampak

## PROGRAM RATES:

Per person, sharing accommodations.....\$6,990

Per person, single accommodations .....\$8,980

### WHAT TO EXPECT

This is a moderately strenuous program that can at times be both physically demanding and busy. There will be two longer travel days from Campeche to Calakmul and Calakmul to Palenque with driving times of four to five hours that will be broken up with rest stops. Participants should be in good health and able to keep pace with the group without assistance from tour staff. Each day is spent largely outdoors, often in the sun, exploring archaeological sites. Walking conditions range from level paths to hilly, uneven terrain, with some stretches more strenuous than others. While the overall pace is moderate, you should be prepared to walk and stand for several hours at a time (resting spots are available along the way).

Travel between sites is by modern, air-conditioned motor coach, with daily drives typically ranging from one to two hours on roads that vary from modern highways to narrower, winding routes. Most hotels offer reliable Wi-Fi and cell service, so you can stay connected throughout the trip. Some historic buildings do not have elevators, and steps without handrails may be encountered.

Daytime temperatures generally reach the mid- to high-80s °F, with early mornings and evenings cooling into the 60s. Combined with high humidity, conditions can feel considerably warmer, but ample refreshments and shaded rest areas are available to help you stay comfortable throughout the day.

### GENERAL INFORMATION PROGRAM RATES INCLUDE:

All accommodations, meals, and excursions as specified in the itinerary • Comprehensive program of briefings, lectures and presentations • Shared airport transfers on group arrival and departure dates • Baggage handling • Gratuities to porters, waitstaff, guides and drivers • Entrance fees • House wine, beer, and soft drinks with group lunches and dinners • Filtered water on motorcoaches • Complete packet of pre-departure information • Expert local guides • Professional tour manager throughout the program.

#### AIR ARRANGEMENTS:

U.S. domestic and international airfare is not included in the program rates. Valerie Wilson Travel, Inc., can help with airline arrangements for this trip and can be reached at 877-376-1754. You are also welcome to book your air transportation through your local travel agent, an online travel site, or the airline of your choice. Further information about making flight arrangements will be sent to confirmed participants.

#### GROUP SIZE:

This program is exclusive to Brandeis Travelers and can accommodate 24 participants.

#### PROGRAM RATES DO NOT INCLUDE:

U.S. domestic and international airfare • Passport/visa expenses • Medical expenses and immunizations • Travel and trip cancellation insurance • Private transfers or airport transfers outside of group arrival and departure dates • Excursions that deviate from the scheduled tour options • Airline baggage charges • Meals not specified in the itinerary; dishes and beverages not part of the

included meals; liquor or soft drinks except as noted • Laundry or dry cleaning • Telephone and internet charges • Room service • Other items of a personal nature.

#### TRAVEL INSURANCE

Brandeis Travelers partners exclusively with Meyer and Associates to offer trip insurance for our tours. Please inquire about trip insurance options once you've made your reservation to meet any time-sensitive requirements. For more information, please call Meyer and Associates at 800-635-7801 or email [info@mey-erandassoc.com](mailto:info@mey-erandassoc.com).

#### A NOTE ABOUT RATES

Tour rates are based upon current fuel prices, currency values, taxes, tariffs, and a minimum number of participants. While we will do everything possible to maintain the listed rates, they are subject to change. If there are significant changes, details and costs will be advised prior to departure.

#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

Complete Terms and Conditions including Statement of Responsibility will be made available to you at time of registration, or in advance upon request. A signed "Terms & Conditions, Release from Liability, Assumption of Risk and Binding Arbitration Clause" is required from each applicant prior to participation on the tour.

#### RESERVATIONS & PAYMENTS

To reserve space online visit : [https://dub.sh/2026\\_MAY\\_BRAN](https://dub.sh/2026_MAY_BRAN) or email Criterion Travel at [res@criterion-travel.com](mailto:res@criterion-travel.com). You may also return the completed reservation form with your \$1,000 per person deposit to: Criterion Travel, 4250 SW Hall Blvd., Beaverton, OR 97005, or fax to (650) 560-6400. Balance of payment is

due September 14, 2026. After September 14, full payment is due upon registration. Final payment may be made by check, wire transfer or credit card (credit card payments will incur a processing fee of 2%).

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

Upon payment of a deposit, all reservations are subject to the cancellation provisions set forth below and by which the passenger agrees to be bound. Cancellations shall not be effective until they are received in writing and confirmed by Brandeis Travelers and Criterion Travel. Deposits are refundable (less a \$250 per person admin fee) if written notice of cancellation is received within 30 days of booking; after that, deposits are 100% nonrefundable. After the September 14, 2026 final payment deadline: All payments are 100% nonrefundable, regardless of booking date. For this reason, we strongly urge participants to purchase trip cancellation insurance. No refunds will be made for any part of this program on which you choose not to participate. NOTE: Neither Brandeis Travelers nor Criterion Travel, the tour operator, accepts liability for any airline cancellation penalty incurred by the purchase of a nonrefundable ticket in conjunction with this tour.

HEALTH

All participants should be in good health and capable of keeping up with an active group of travelers. By forwarding the deposit for passage, the passenger certifies that he/she does not have any physical or other condition or disability that would create a hazard for him/herself or other passengers.

ITINERARY CHANGES

The itinerary presented for this tour is subject to modification and change by Brandeis Travelers and Criterion Travel, the tour operator. Every reasonable effort will be made to operate the program as planned; however, should unforeseen world events and conditions require the itinerary to be altered, Brandeis Travelers and the tour operator reserve the right to do so for the safety and best interest of the group. Any extra expenses incurred in this situation are the responsibility of the participant.

DISCLAIMER:

Brandeis University is not responsible for any tour operator policies or for any refunds. Criterion Travel is the operator of this program and solely responsible for carrying out the responsibilities associated with it. Additionally, Brandeis University, as a sponsor, has no financial or legal responsibility for the program. Further documentation, including applicable Terms & Conditions associated with participation in this program, will be sent to confirmed participants.

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CST #2088800-40

THE MAYA: HIDDEN WORLDS REVEALED  
EXPLORING THE YUCATAN PENINSULA & CHIAPAS

December 12-21, 2026



RESERVE  
ONLINE

For more information, please call (888) 328-2089 or email [res@criteriontravel.com](mailto:res@criteriontravel.com).

You may also complete and return this reservation form with your deposit of \$1,000 per person, payable to Criterion Travel, to: Criterion Travel, 4250 SW Hall Blvd., Beaverton, OR 97005, or fax the completed form to (650) 560-6400.

NAME #1 (as it appears on passport) BIRTHDATE

NAME #2 (as it appears on passport) BIRTHDATE

MAILING ADDRESS

CITY / STATE / ZIP or POSTAL CODE

HOME PHONE MOBILE PHONE

E-MAIL #1 ADDRESS

E-MAIL #2 ADDRESS

PAYMENT

Please charge the \$1,000 per person deposit to my credit card (circle one): VISA / MC / AMEX / DISCOVER

NAME AS IT APPEARS ON CREDIT CARD

CARD # EXP. DATE / CVV SECURITY CODE

SIGNATURE AS IT APPEARS ON CREDIT CARD DATE

☐ Enclosed is my check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ (\$1,000 per person, payable to Criterion Travel) to reserve \_\_\_\_\_ place(s) for THE MAYA: HIDDEN WORLDS REVEALED – Exploring the Yucatan Peninsula & Chiapas

SINGLE TRAVELERS

☐ I prefer to have single accommodations (*limited availability*)  
**OR** ☐ I plan to share accommodations with:

\_\_\_\_\_ **OR**

☐ I'd like to know about roommates *I understand that if a roommate cannot be found by the final payment deadline of September 14, 2026 I will pay the single rate.*

ACCOMMODATIONS

Bed Preference (not guaranteed): ☐ One bed ☐ Two beds

I/We have read the Terms & Conditions section of this brochure and understand and agree with them as stated herein:

SIGNATURE DATE

SIGNATURE DATE



Mayan wood-carved masks

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