

BE OUR GUEST

Written by Marlene Alexander

Friday, 01 June 2007

www.dollarstorestyle.com

Now that the kids have moved away from home you have no idea what to do with all that extra space, right? But, seriously, if you're going to turn that spare room into a guest room, here are a few things you can get at the dollar store to help make visitors feel welcome. We turned an old desk into a vanity table by adding a few items to make company feel welcome.



Fill a basket with necessities that a guest might have forgotten to pack such as:

- a comb and brush set
- a sample size hand lotion
- a sample size deodorant
- shower gel in fun shape
- toothpaste and a toothbrush
- basket

Everything here was a dollar except the toothpaste.

We're not going to buy a tube of toothpaste for a dollar when we can get the same thing at a department store for sixty-nine cents or less. Also shown is a vase with a bouquet of fabric flowers and a small decorative dish to hold jewelry or loose change.

Put a small container of water and a glass in the room and leave a tasty treat of some kind as a welcome. This plastic pitcher was a dollar and the drinking glass came in a set of three for a dollar. We opened a small bag of wrapped candy and used a cut glass dessert dish as a candy dish. Each was a dollar. And even if you're on vacation, you still need to know the time. We used a travel alarm clock to fill the need.



You can put a pillar candle in your guest's room but we chose to use this trio of tea lights on a clear glass tray sprinkled with mini river rocks. The combination of hammered glass and river rocks help to instill the room with a sense of peace.

It won't cost a lot of money to put out the welcome mat if you start with a trip to the dollar store.

- End -



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What Ever Happened To Women's Lib?

Contributed by C. Martin
Thursday, 17 May 2007

(originally published in The Capitol News, Corydon IN)

Recently, I was discriminated against at my workplace.

It was that time of year, when boxes of old files had to be shuffled from one storage room to another.

Ordinarily, my co-worker (a 60-something grandfather) and I sit behind desks, making the files that go in these boxes. We work in a white-collar environment where the most strenuous work we have to perform is unjamming staplers or accepting deliveries of office supplies. But this week, the boss gave us the order not only to build shelves for housing the said files, but to transfer the archived files to the newly built shelves, and to "get it done quickly."

This ritual has been oft repeated over the years, but what made this year's ceremony unique was the steady stream of people coming to the basement to ask us if we were done yet; that's annoying. Besides all that, the week before, I was out sick with the stomach flu, and really wasn't feeling up to the whole manual labor gig.

At this point, some of you might be wondering where our help was. Well, there is no help. In our office, we are the sole male staff members; we work with a bunch of chicks. And the fact that they're somehow above being conscripted into pack mule service really rubs me wrong.

Growing up, I remember so well all the raging debates over equal rights: How women were treated unfairly in the workplace, didn't earn enough money, were sexually harassed, blah, blah, blah. I remember people getting upset that men still opened doors for women.

When I joined the Air Force in 1990, the military was adamant about stamping out sexual discrimination. Yet, it seemed odd to me that men and women wore different uniforms. That women had different physical fitness standards. That women could wear makeup and jewelry and men couldn't even have beards.

Today, I'm married and have two daughters. I'm the male minority in my house—My girly-house, with flowers, pillows and Barbie dolls everywhere. Thank God I have a basement I can retreat to, adorned with GI JOES, movie posters, and my computer.

My recent box slinging has really gotten me thinking though. What ever happened to equal rights for women? Hillary Clinton is being seriously touted as a Presidential candidate in the next election, so surely that's a sign that women are not second class citizens.

So why was it that me and a man almost ready for retirement were the only ones moving those 60 pound boxes? Why couldn't the younger (than both of us) girls in the office have been helping out? Why am I asked to carry cases of blank paper to the back on a regular basis? Why do the secretaries always want me or my co-worker to fix this or that?

And it's not just my workplace. Try as I might, I can't recall what color ribbon people wear for national testicular cancer week. Just recently, when people were encouraged to wear red on a Friday, I recall that it was because heart disease is a leading killer of women. Funny, the only people I've ever known to have heart attacks were men.

What happened? When did it happen? Years ago the most abrasive bullying person on daytime television was Morton Downey Jr. Today the biggest bully is Rosie O'Donnell.

In researching this further on the internet, I see that the National Organization for Women is still alive and kicking. And still pushing for an equal rights amendment. I think that's an excellent idea. Let's have some equal rights. Let's make women sign up for Selective Service. Why can't a woman go into combat? When do I get to stop opening doors for women, or standing up when they enter a room? Or letting them go first?

I think it's high time women started pulling their own weight, and stopped whining they aren't being treated fairly. I'll tell you who's not being treated fairly: My back!

Summer Cook-out Ideas

Contributed by Lisa Greer
Tuesday, 22 May 2007

Summertime is peak time for pitch-in meals and get-togethers for grilling, and the last thing anyone wants to do for these carefree events is spend a lot of time in the kitchen prepping food. My philosophy is just throw it together and go.

Our first item involves some prep time, but no measuring or mixing. Now, before you say eewwww when you read the title, keep in mind that kabobs can be anything you want to put on the skewer. It doesn't have to be deer meat, so beef, chicken or simply vegetables will suffice.

Venison Kabobs (for group of 8)

- 4 Venison Steaks
(Depending on the size of the steak, you'll probably want to prepare one steak for every two guests)
- 2-3 green peppers
- 1-2 red onions
- 1 can of pineapple chunks in its own juice
- 1 bottle of Kraft Asian salad dressing
- Progresso garlic flavored wine vinegar
- 16 extra long skewers

The night before, cut steaks into strips, then cut the strips down to 2, or 2 ½ inches long. Place meat in a bowl and sprinkle with the garlic vinegar, coating each piece. Then pour the bottle of Kraft dressing over the meat, place in an airtight container and let set overnight in the refrigerator.

The day of the cookout, cut onions and peppers in sections a little larger than the pineapple chunks.

Next, assemble the kabobs on each skewer by alternating pepper, onion, pineapple, meat, pineapple and repeat. Once assembled, grill according to your taste.

Grilled Vegetables (group of 8)

- 2 large zucchini (or, 4 small)
- 2 large squash (or 4 small)
- 2 large bell peppers (more if desired)
- 8-10 green onions

Cut vegetables in bite-size chunks, and using a barbecue brush, coat vegetables with extra virgin olive oil. Sprinkle with desired seasoning such as crushed red pepper, or Asian spice. Grill until tender, then serve over brown rice and sprinkle with parmesan cheese.

New twist to fondue

- 1 package of your favorite crème filled cookies
- 1 8oz pkg of cream cheese (softened)
- dipping chocolate

Place cookies in a plastic bag large enough to hold all of them and still have room. Squeeze the air out of the bag and close it tight, then crush cookies using a rolling pin. Place crushed cookies in a bowl and mix in the cream cheese. Form balls from the mixture with a teaspoon and dip in melted chocolate. Place on wax paper to harden and refrigerate until ready to eat.

Now that we've given you a few easy recipes, here's one that's a bit more complicated, but well worth the effort.

Corn Casserole

- 1 & 1/2 - 2 cups kernel corn

- 1 & 1/2 cups creamed corn
- 1 - 1 & 1/2 cups elbow macaroni
- cayenne pepper
- crushed red & black pepper
- Italian seasonings (or, Mrs. Dash spicy)
- Velveeta cheese
- Jar of salsa (optional)
- Wheat Thins (optional)

Pour kernel corn into bottom of ungreased caserole dish. Cover with layer of cheese and spices. Pour elbow macaroni on top of cheese. Either use another layer of cheese or pour jar of salsa. Pour creamed corn on top of cheese/salsa. Top with cheese, spices and crackers.

Bake at 350 for 35 minutes. Check pasta after 35 minutes to see if cooked.

Note: if you use canned kernel corn, pour the water off the second can. The only purpose for the water from the first can is to help cook the macaroni. If you use fresh or frozen corn, add 2-3 tablespoons of water.

SAFETY WITH FIREWORKS



Written by Rexinto

Monday, 28 May 2007



Hello Everyone, and welcome to my area of the magazine. I am the newest member of the Sensible Life team, and will be traveling the world to exciting places looking for safety tips to share with you. Since others like me aren't around anymore, I feel safety is very important for us to know and share. I am so excited that my first experience was in Louisville, Kentucky for Thunder over Louisville, one of the biggest fireworks displays in the country. There are planes flying over, doing tricks for the people, and large, colorful fireworks that go on and on after dark. But to put on such a fun show, there are dozens and dozens of people dedicated to the safety of those watching and those working.

Kentucky, Indiana, and some other surrounding states will only sell what's known as "safe and sane" fireworks to individuals, and the good stuff has to be purchased and set up by experienced individuals who have training in that sort of thing. There is also a National Council on Fireworks Safety that gives safety tips to local residents and Thunder-goers to make sure everyone has a great time at the show. They provide the following tips for the people who come to watch:

- Obey all ushers and monitors, and watch out for safety barriers that are set up so that the people with training have the room to do their job. In fact, the best view of the fireworks is from a quarter of a mile or more away.
- Although it rarely happens, it is possible that a firework component might fall to the ground without exploding. You should be cautious, and not touch these fireworks. If you find any that have not yet gone off, find a policeman or fireman to handle the situation.
- Leave your own fireworks at home -- the display will provide plenty of excitement, and leave pets at home, the loud boom can hurt their ears.
- Sit back, relax and enjoy the show!

They also offer safety tips for the upcoming July 4th celebration to help make it safe for everyone.

- Always read and follow the directions on the fireworks.
- Have an adult present to supervise.
- Buy all fireworks from good, reliable sellers.
- Use outdoors only, never inside.
- Always have water handy, such as from a garden hose and a bucket.
- Never experiment or try to make your own fireworks.
- Light only one firework at a time.
- Never re-light a "dud" firework, but rather wait 15 to 20 minutes and then soak it in a bucket of water.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place.
- Dispose of fireworks by soaking them in water and then putting them into the trash can.
- Never throw or point fireworks at other people.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- The person lighting the fireworks should always wear eye protection and never have any part of the body over the firework.
- Stay away from illegal explosives.

For more information on fireworks safety, have your family visit <http://www.fireworksafety.com>.

And let's not forget the guys in the airplanes and helicopters doing stunts all day long for the people. They spin, twirl, and come right down to the river. They all have special training and guidelines that they have to follow when in the air and are concerned about not only their safety, but the safety of those on the ground.

Between the airplanes and the fireworks, Thunder over Louisville was certainly a fun show, and now I'm off looking for my next big event. If you have any ideas, please e-mail them to me at Rexinto@sensiblelife.com, or post them on my blog at

<http://blog.myspace.com/rexinto> .

Thanks, and I look forward to hearing from you! And remember, be safe...

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NEVER GIVE UP

Contributed by C. Martin
Saturday, 16 June 2007

In my day job, I take complaints. A lot of complaints. Complaints from real jerks that haven't the slightest idea of what manners are. And I don't exactly make the big bucks for putting up with all their crap. For many, many years, I have always been a person hesitant to make complaints. The complaint taker is almost never the source of the problem anyway, so why be rude to them. However, as I have grown older, and had to listen to other people gripe and moan for ten years, I have changed my mind.

Now, I complain.

Actually, I should say that I complain when I'm justified to do so. Fair is fair, and when anyone doesn't get treated fairly they should speak up. And that's just what this story is about.

Several years ago, a few months before Father's Day, a major retailer advertised a clever contest- dads could write down a great moment with their kids that they wished they'd caught on video. The entries had to be handwritten, and dropped off at each participating store. Each store would then select one winner, and then all those local winners would be further judged for a National grand prize winner.

The prizes? Each local winner was to get a brand new flip cellphone with all sorts of gimmicks built in and a free year's worth of service. The National Grandprize winner was to get a package worth \$25,000. It included just about every electronic gadget a dad could want, a several-thousand dollar gift card to the Retailer and a Visa-type giftcard from the Retailer.

I was very interested.

I carefully printed off an entry and thought about what I would write for days. Eventually I settled on what I thought was a very appropriate tale of my three year old. At the time, my daughter greatly enjoyed watching the behind-the-scenes segments on DVDs with me. When Terminator 3 came out on DVD, we got a copy and raced home to watch it. When the movie was over, I started to watch the extras. However, my daughter wanted to watch some cartoons. Right about the time Arnold appeared on the screen and declared "I'll be back." my girl grabbed the remote, declared "No you won't." and turned the DVD player off.

Okay, it was a so-so story. Funny, but not a knee-slapper. We went to the retailer, driving for about 30 minutes to get there, dropped off my entry and ended up buying a few things when we browsed the store.

A few months passed and I thought I'd check online to see what the winning entries were. I was eager to read all kinds of great tales of child antics. One problem though. The webpage for the contest was gone.

I double-checked my bookmarks in Internet Explorer. I ran a search. Nothing.

Suspicious, I emailed customer service. They later emailed me back, claiming they had never heard of such a contest.

I called customer service. After claiming to not know about the contest, nor of being able to find it on the retailer's website, the rep I talked to eventually started looking through the online Sunday fliers. Sure enough, he found the contest listed.

Unfortunately, I had called just one week too late. Had I called the week before, I could have requested a list of the winner's names.

After a few minutes of arguing, the rep changed his mind and said that if I sent a letter showing I had emailed during the period posted he was sure they would give me the winner's names.

At this point, I knew I was being had. It reminded me of the time I handwrote 650 postcards and deposited them in a drawing box for a free pickup. After all there was no limit on the number of entries.

My next step was the Better Business Bureau. I explained my complaint and cited some Indiana statutes that mandate the odds for winning in a contest have to be displayed.

By December, I began a series of emails with an attorney for the retailer. I learned that the contest had been delayed- that judging all the entries had proven too large a task for the company running the contest. I was assured the judging would continue and winners would be selected. I pointed out that a lot of retailers have been known to pull fast ones with these kinds of contests- claiming to award prizes merely to bait consumers into their stores.

February came and I checked back with the attorney- reminding him that I still wanted proof it was a real contest. I was told winners had been picked and I would get a list of the winners names.

A couple of days later, I came home to find a Fed Ex package on my doorstep. I opened it up expecting to find just a list of winners. Instead, it contained a gift card to the retailer for \$576, and congratulations for winning at my local store.

The moral of this story is that like insurance companies, businesses will do their best to not respond to complaints how you want them to. But if you're right, don't give up. It doesn't cost you anything but time to complain. On the otherhand, for a business, their attorneys are spending much more valuable time than you are answering your complaints.

And what'd I do with the money? Bought my little girl some DVDs and a wall-mount swing arm for her TV, got my wife a new cellphone, and bought myself a kickin' graphics card for my PC and a couple of new games.

MAKING YOUR OWN CENTERPIECES AND FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS



Written by Lisa Greer

Monday, 28 May 2007

Ever wonder how to put together a simple centerpiece or floral arrangement without spending a small fortune at your local florist? This issue, Sensible Life provides some tried and true tips and suggestions for even the most amateur of individuals. To get started, you will first need to select the area you wish to decorate, and decide what statement you want to make with your arrangement.

Things to consider:

- Do you want a splash of color to be the focal point of the room, or perhaps just something to enhance it?
- Would you prefer an arrangement that calms, or perhaps reminds one of the beach?
- Is it for the long term, or just for short time?
- Do you want natural materials, or artificial, or perhaps a look that is more crafted?

Once you've answered these questions, you're ready to begin. Let's first look at the materials you'll need. If you are doing a silk floral arrangement in a vase, or something similar, you'll need some florist tape and foam. If using real flowers, depending on whether you're doing cut flowers, or a variety of plants, you'll need water holding floral foam. I rarely use any of these because I like the simple look of cut flowers in a vase that fall naturally and just fill in any empty looking areas with greenery or baby's breath.



When making a floral arrangement remember, if it's in a tall vase, your flowers will look much more appealing if you have your highest point in the center and cascading down in a hill-like manner. For a vase that will sit against a wall, the high point should be in the center and toward the back of the vase, with your fullness cascading down and toward the front and sides.



When choosing colors, select those in varying colors, but within the same color group. This will give the best effect. Your filler, depending on the look and season you're going for, can be anything from greenery to fall leaves, to sticks, or even flags. The same applies to centerpieces.

The main point

to keep in mind is balance. Even if you're doing an asymmetrical design, everything should be well proportioned, so it doesn't just appear that you've stuck some flowers and sticks in a piece of Styrofoam and stuck it on a table.

Keep in mind, when doing wreaths, centerpieces, or table or mantle décor, you'll need something to anchor things to your base. In most instances, hot glue works well. Sometimes you'll need wire, fishing wire, or even non-waxed dental floss.



For natural looking centerpieces, try attaching dried flowers, shells, or maybe an air fern to a piece of driftwood. Another option would be to place a small piece of driftwood toward the back of an oblong plate, or platter, place river rock or pea gravel around it, and then add some tealight candles inside glass votive holders (make sure they are a safe distance from the wood). Sand also works well in this setting, unless your piece will be near a breeze such as a ceiling fan. When using sand, you can fill in the rest with seashells you've collected, and even place tealights inside of the larger ones. To really make your centerpiece sparkle, take some glass pebbles purchased at your local craft store and sprinkle some around the tealight



Image

Keep
in mind
that

arrangements and centerpieces can be comprised of just about anything that you enjoy looking at. Combinations of old and new can add interest, and any hint of sparkle is sure to enhance the piece and catch the eye of your guests. Some items to consider when selecting a base for your centerpiece would be large rocks or stones, bricks, grapevines, mirrors, old books, or even a piece of old wood from a barn (just make sure there are no insects in the wood). Accents for your centerpiece can be beads, lace, pinecones, small gourds, shells, starfish, stuffed animals, gold or silver gravel, candles, pieces of stained glass, or even some bark. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination.

For some unique possibilities, check out the following websites.

<http://www.allcrafts.net>, and more specifically the ideas at the bottom of this link <http://www.allcrafts.net/nature.htm>

<http://www.yourweddingcompany.com/index.php/action/createCenterpieceStyle/>





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HOOSIERS FEEDING THE HUNGRY



Written by Lisa Greer

Monday, 28 May 2007

Indiana volunteers are working together to do their part in fighting the hunger battle that plagues our nation today. Throughout the state, including neighboring Kentucky, volunteers organize charity events and collect funds from local businesses and individuals to pay processing fees for farmers and hunters donating a portion of their bounty to feed the hungry. These volunteers are members of Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH), a non-profit organization with local chapters throughout the United States. FHFH is an outreach ministry through which farmers and hunters donate extra deer, beef and pork to feed the homeless in their area. FHFH works with local butcher shops that are USDA or health Department inspected and are willing to accept and process deer, cows and hogs that are donated by hunters and landowners. The packaged meat is then distributed to food banks, homeless shelters and soup kitchens. The butcher sends their bills for the processing of the meat at an average of \$50.00 per deer or \$.40 per lb. for Hog or Cattle to the FHFH local Coordinator for payment.

Each FHFH local program raises money through a variety of events and campaigns to cover these costs. For each \$50.00 donated, FHFH can feed approximately 200 people. In 2006, through the Indiana chapters alone, there were 433 deer donated, at approximately 21,650 pounds of meat, resulting in 86,600 meals. In addition, Farmers donated 3000 pounds of meat from hog/cattle processing. FHFH would like to double that amount for 2007.



The FHFH outreach ministry was founded in 1997 by Rick Wilson, at his church in Washington County, Maryland as a result of an experience that he would never forget.

Early one morning he was driving along the highway and pulled over to help a woman in distress. Wilson assumed she was having car trouble, but soon found that she was trying to load a six point buck into her car that had been lying dead along the side of the road. She asked, "Would you help me load that up in the trunk? Me and my kids are hungry"



Wilson helped this lady, and that single incident has grown into an organization that helps millions. "It's not just feeding hungry people; it's saving peoples lives." Wilson said.

Over the years, activist groups have diminished the good name hunters once had, but organizations like FHFH allows hunters to return to their heritage as food providers. "FHFH's mission is to turn deer –a God-given resource –into food for the hungry." Each deer harvested can feed 200 people, and wild meat is actually healthier as it contains less fat and higher protein than grain fed cattle. With the deer population being at an all time high, hunters can use God's bounty to feed the hungry.

If you'd like more information on this, or would be interested in supporting FHFH with a donation, please contact your local chapter of FHFH, which may be located by visiting www.fhfh.org.

For our Louisville, Southern Indiana area, you may contact Kim Greer at 812-952-3559, or e-mail at kimgreer@insightbb.com

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Grow Your Own Flower Shop



Written by Suzanne Jackson

Tuesday, 15 May 2007

I love fresh-cut flowers. I enjoy buying mixed bouquets from flower shops and grocery stores then splitting them into smaller arrangements to display in my home and at work. But, there's nothing more rewarding than growing them myself.

The problem has always been where? We live in the suburbs where each year builders have built bigger houses on smaller lots. Building codes in our area require that houses be at least 10' away from each other. So ours is 10' 1" from our neighbors'. That means that our "side yards", and I use the term loosely, are only 5' wide. One side is accessible by a gate from the front. This "yard" consists of a 3 1/2' sidewalk lined by a 1 1/2' flower bed. We keep the bed filled with colorful annuals. It makes for a pleasant stroll to the back yard.

The other side is a little harder to get to. There is no gate access so, from outside, you have to walk completely around the house to get there. Twenty years ago we planted two 3' high Liquid Amber trees. Fifteen years later they were 10 times that size and their roots were causing our block wall to shift and crack. We spent one very long weekend and several hundred dollars cutting them down. That left this area home to some beautifully raked dirt and our air conditioner, and it remained that way for quite sometime. What good was a hard-to-get-at never-seen patch of dirt anyway? Then it hit me. It was perfect for a cutting garden!

Cutting gardens are not intended to be seen. They're grown strictly for the purpose of providing fresh-cut flowers. And because the flowers are constantly being cut from the plants, cutting gardens are not very attractive. So, we spent another long weekend, and another couple hundred dollars, transforming the space. Because of the limited access, pouring a sidewalk was out of the question. We choose instead to use stepping stones. To determine the size and spacing we walked up and down the area to see where our footsteps fell. We also knelt, sat, and reached as if we were planting or cutting. We wanted to make sure we could perform these tasks without getting muddy.

Next came the water source. We still had automatic sprinklers in this area that had been used to water our monster trees. We did have to re-work them a little to fit the new garden. I was not adverse, however, to watering this small area by hand. I didn't care for the idea of dragging a hose back there but the thought of sprinkling my flowers from an old-fashioned watering can was a charming one.



All that was left was a trip to the nursery. Gardening books will tell you that cutting gardens should be planted in full sun but this narrow space between two houses is in shade for part of the day. I decided to ignore the sun requirements on the plant tags and just plant the types of flowers I love having in my house. Some grew, some didn't. I keep going back to the nursery and trying different plants. The experimenting is as rewarding as the flowers themselves.

So, if you love fresh-cut flowers like I do, take a look around your yard. See if you can find an awkward good-for-nothing area that you can transform into your own personal flower shop.

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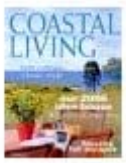
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COASTAL LIVING MAGAZINE



Written by Lisa Greer

Monday, 28 May 2007



If you're a person who enjoys visiting the seashore, you'll definitely want to check out Coastal Living Magazine for a year round coastal experience. This publication is all about interesting people and places in coastal areas primarily in the U.S., but also features locations in other parts of the world.

Learn about how couples and individuals alike with that same love of the shore have made their dreams come true with stories about how they purchased and remodeled their first beach home, or maybe those who have passed down beach cottages through the generations, and those who have lived on the coast all their lives. This magazine also features places readers can travel to, and places where they can find wonderful food and fun for making memories that last a lifetime. Writers for Coastal Living travel to well remote and well-known locations to bring to readers that little piece of shoreline bliss that only those who love the coast can relate to.

For more information on this publication, please visit their website at www.coastalliving.com

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BIENVENIDO A MÉXICO



Written by Lisa Greer

Thursday, 17 May 2007

(Welcome to Mexico)

Whether you're vacationing in Cozumel, or just visiting this port of call from a cruise ship, you'll have no trouble finding things to do. Noted for its sparkling waters and colorful underwater flora and fauna, this Western Caribbean destination is one of the most popular diving spots in the world. Even if you're not a diver, you can still enjoy the underwater scene with a well guided snorkeling tour, but that's not all this destination has to offer.

Off the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, Cozumel Mexico was discovered over 2000 years ago by the Mayan people. With a variety of tours available, you can explore these historical settlements as tour guides provide facts about the area and explain the secrets, myths and legends of this mysterious culture. Situated along the crystal Caribbean waters, the Mayan ruins at Tulum in Playa del Carmen is an excellent tour with centuries old temples and fantastic ocean views.



When you're not touring or enjoying water activities, Cozumel is a shopper's paradise. Merchants and flea markets offer a wide range of souvenirs, as well as great deals on silver, diamonds and pearls. If you enjoy getting a bargain, most places are agreeable to negotiating. The main shopping areas are downtown along the waterfront, the crafts market behind the Plaza and the local cruise ship terminal. U.S. dollars are accepted most places, and merchandise ranges from colorful blankets, hammocks, and Mexican crafts to T-shirts, jewelry and endangered black coral.



Mayan Ruins

Before you purchase anything of value such as gold or gems, make sure you have checked out the shop to ensure it is a reputable one. If you are visiting from a cruise ship, the cruise lines have checked this out beforehand and provided that information to travelers. Otherwise, you may want to check with your hotel concierge to find out the best places to go, as well as any to avoid.

When booking accommodations, it is wise to use a travel agent to ensure your stay in a 3-5 star hotel in a safe area. Vacation packages range from around \$600 per person to \$1100, with many offering all-inclusive deals. This is your best budgeting bet. Such packages include meals, beverages and many of your water activities, and when you add up what you would spend daily on these items, you'll find this to be a bargain.

Activities in the all-inclusive package generally include pool and beach games, tennis, volleyball, billiards, fitness center, snorkeling, windsurfing, kayaking, scuba demos, and use of pools and spa tubs. Some include motorized water sports equipment and some do not.



If you go, some tips to remember: You must have a valid passport. Remember to check weather and rainy seasons before you book, and keep in mind that summers are extremely hot. You may either check with your travel agent, or look online at www.travelyucatan.com. Also remember to dress for the weather, packing light weight cottons, sandals and a pair of good walking shoes. Most important, remember not to drink the tap water, and order your restaurant beverages with no ice. Buena suerte! (good luck)

Mayan city

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WORDS OF POWER

Contributed by Christy Fowler
Thursday, 31 May 2007

With my mighty pen
Across the simple pages,
In place of words
Life itself at view
Through epic stories and wondrous books
Years of heart filled effort,
Unto fantasy and fiction
Without mortal limits
Within everlasting words
Above the stars,
Beyond the plot unfolded,
Toward the readers' detecting mind
Underneath the long awaited suspense,
Into the book a new world
Inside the words out of life,
Instead of a book,
About another life
Across your own,
Throughout your dreams! ~End~