



# Mad For Mexico

Jim McMichael

*Diving the cenote*

**Not so much a detailed review of a trip to an exotic diving destination, more a meander through how the mind of a 40 something Glaswegian works. It's all there - deception of spouse, casual attitude towards the law enforcement agencies, the joys of going down a hole ...**

MANY MONTHS ago Les said to me: "We should dive the holes in the jungles of Mexico before you get too old."

I confess to a long pause before I replied: "Are you out of your mind - I am certainly NOT too old!" I checked that his grey cells were in full working order and then checked my own - he seemed to be sober enough and so that was that, I was persuaded to embark on the dive holiday of a lifetime.

Now I just had to persuade my wife, Irene - who strangely enough did think I was too old so I shall call it an expedition rather than a holiday, she will never see through that!

A long time later and we arrived at Glasgow Airport complete with our expedition gear which we duly deposited down a black hole, which seems a fair description for an airport under construction to say the least. All was

going well until our flight was cancelled! Information was scant and tempers were short, the 'Polis' arrived to calm 200 or so hacked off holidaymakers.

Thereafter we were sent to the hospital - no last minute illness - they just had to get us out of the airport in order to restore some peace. Les and I ended up in the hotel part of the Royal Jubilee hospital and very posh it was too - £150 a night. Our flight had been moved from 1.30pm Monday to 8.00am Tuesday and there was not a nurse in sight to care for our frayed nerves.

We eventually arrived at Cancun Airport, 50 acres of marble halls and polished glass (and air conditioning), Glasgow eat your heart out.

Our diving at Cancun was organised by Boris (not Karloff, strangely for a diver). His place was next to a pool bar which was situated right by the sand and only 100 yards from the boat - perfect. The diving had it all - lovely colours, turtles, caves, sharks, drop offs, great viz and sometimes a very lively current but not enough to lose your buddy (honestly).

I would however not recommend a visit to the pyramids, it is a 12 hour sweat and three mile slog over dodgy terrain and should you be unlucky enough to break a leg they might well leave you. I'd say your money is better spent on two more sea dives or purchasing your wife some Mexican silver (if like mine she didn't really buy this whole expedition thing).

The food was good, the drinks were good and the heat was straight out of Dante's Inferno - hellish. I was well and truly waterlogged, but as a true ruffy tufty diver I was game (maybe daft) enough to be persuaded by Les to dive the Cenotes - those famous holes in the middle of the jungle.

Yet another early rise and a long day loomed ahead of us. On the port side of our minibus was an expanse of water of

which Les had a query, "Are there any crocodiles in there?"

"Sí, señor, there are plenty of beeeeeeeeg crocodiles," replied our driver.

After a few miles the minibus drew into a lay-by and the driver jumped out and beckoned us over to where he was standing. Four paces from our shaking knees lay one very 'beeeeeeg' crocodile with an evil look in its eye. I quickly hid behind Les, this beast was looking for its dinner and I didn't want to be the first course.

After two hours we arrived at our dive site and there was nothing but jungle above, below and ahead in fact the only water around was dripping from my, and everyone else's, chin. Still, diving a cenote was going to be fun - a big wreck wi' nae fish. Our guide had a torch and what a torch it was - it could have lit the whole of Glasgow it was so powerful.

It was necessary though as there were major problems with diving this cenote - no steps, no handrails, no safety harness, a tangle of jungle roots and a lot of steep, rough limestone just waiting to break your limbs. Add the diving gear to the equation and it was not an easy dive, bearing in mind that it was the middle of the jungle where helicopters are rare and the prospect was a long limp to hospital. We tread carefully, very carefully indeed - this cenote was dangerous enough to give a health and safety man a palouri.

My conclusion was that the caves on St Kilda are safer and have no beeeeeeg crocodiles, señor. However, the Mexican people are great, always ready with a big beaming smile and the children - give them a smile and the one you get back will brighten your day. They have nothing by our standards and yet they have everything and they never hold out an open hand (maybe they know how tight us divers are). This is a long way to go for a dive, but then all divers are a bit mad anyway.



*Beeeg crocodile*



*Mexican sealife*



*Mexican pyramid*



*Happy Mexican kids*

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