

Day 0, Wednesday, January 8, 2025

I received an email from American Airlines informing me that “Winter Storm Cora” was expected to bring snow, ice, and freezing rain” and would significantly impact travel to Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) airport on January 9th. They mentioned that I could change my flight to DFW on that date without any fee, but I’d need to go through my travel agent to make the adjustments. When I checked the rules on Orbitz, it indicated there might be a change fee and suggested I contact American Airlines directly. So, I called American Airlines and was put on a lengthy hold. So, I called American Airlines and was put on a long hold. While waiting for them to pick up the phone, I decided to try making the changes on Orbitz, and I was able to do so without any additional charge. It seems American Airlines may have adjusted the rules on Orbitz for that storm day. I ended up changing my flight to route me through Miami (MIA) instead of DFW. I then emailed TourRadar, the company handling my Cycle Mexico - The Yucatan Peninsula tour, to update them on my new flight details and requested a change to my Cancun airport pickup time to match the updated flight arrival and number.

Day 1, Thursday, January 9, 2025

I rode my bike for 28 miles around Portland and finished packing for my trip to Cancun. At 6:30 PM, I walked to the Rosa Parks MAX station with my luggage and took the train to Portland International Airport (PDX). On the way, I checked the status of my original flight to DFW and saw that it had been canceled—thankfully, I had changed my plans the day before. Once at PDX, I walked around the airport and grabbed a sub from Potbelly for dinner. I realized I had forgotten to pack snacks for the trip, which was the main thing I left behind. After hanging out with the cycling group, I also realized I should’ve brought a nicer shirt for dinner. The TSA check at PDX was super easy—no line, and with the new X-ray machines, you don’t have to show your liquids or remove your laptop. I explored almost every area of the PDX airport, except for the closed E wing. PDX has recently undergone a major renovation, and it's definitely shaping up to be a really nice airport. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 0 miles)

Day 2, Friday, January 10, 2025

The flight to Miami International Airport (MIA) was on time, and I had a 5-hour layover there. I explored as much of the airport as I could, even took two airport terminal trains. The flight to Cancun went smoothly, but when I arrived, the security line was quite long. After getting through security, I left the airport and quickly spotted the guy holding the Explorer sign with my name on it. He called my shuttle, which soon picked me up. The driver took me to my hotel, where I found my roommate’s things in the room, but he wasn’t there yet. I went for a long walk and I found a nice bike trail before heading back to the hotel. When I returned, I met my roommate, and we had a beer together. Then we attended the tour’s welcome meeting at the hotel, where we met the rest of our guided tour group: Kevin from San Diego, Lyle, Bela, Bernie, Liz, Sue, and Maria from the UK, as well as Victor, our Mexican tour guide. We had dinner at a Mexican restaurant with a Mariachi band. I enjoyed an excellent fish dinner with rice and vegetables. Afterward, I worked on some computer tasks and went to bed around midnight. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 0 miles)

Day 3, Saturday, January 11, 2025

I woke up around 7:10 AM and had breakfast at 7:30 AM. After that, we cycled to the ferry terminal and took the ferry to Isla Mujeres. Once on the island, we rode around and stopped at Punta Sur, the southern tip, to take some photos. Our group decided not to pay to do the coastal trail, so we kept riding. We then stopped for lunch, but I opted to skip it and went for a walk instead. Later, Bernie and I cycled to a trail on the island, where we stopped for a beer. We then met up with the rest of the group at the ferry terminal and took the ferry back to Cancún, then cycled back to the hotel. Afterward, Bernie and I went for a walk to a nearby market area, where we had some ice cream before heading back to the hotel. At 6:00 PM, we gathered with the cycle Mexico group for dinner, where I had Mole Negro Enchiladas with a beer—it was delicious. We then returned to the hotel, and after a shower, I went to sleep around 11:00 PM. (Daily bike miles 14.2 miles; Total trip bike miles 14.2 miles)

Day 4, Sunday, January 12, 2025

We woke up around 6:20 AM and packed up our gear. The tour van then took us to Chichen Itza (founded in AD 432), where we explored the ruins. Chichen Itza is home to incredible sculptures, pyramids, palaces, temples, and a ball court—where the penalty for losing was death (the winner was sacrificed to the gods). The Great Ball Court is an expansive open-air field used for the Mesoamerican ball game, Pok-a-Tok. After leaving Chichen Itza, we stopped at a traditional Mayan home-restaurant for a delicious buffet lunch. Then, we drove to Yokdzonot Cenote for a refreshing swim. The Yucatán is filled with caves and swimming holes, some of which you can scuba dive through. Cenotes aren't just bodies of water; they are believed to be gateways to the underworld, sacred places connected to the gods and the afterlife. After swimming for a while, we headed to Merida, Mexico, where we cycled through the town. Merida was founded in 1542 by Francisco de Montejo, built over the ruins of a Mayan city, and is known as the 'White City.' We checked into our hotel, and I went for a walk. Then I met up with our group and went out for dinner at a great taco spot. I went to bed around midnight. (Daily bike miles 4 miles; Total trip bike miles 18.2 miles)

Day 5, Monday, January 13, 2025

We woke up around 6:20 AM, ate breakfast, packed up and they took us in the van to Progreso, Mexico. Then we cycled towards Telchac, crossing coastal lagoons, beautiful beaches, and spotting exotic birds. We saw several flamingos, but did not stop to check them out. We had another stop where we expected to see a lot of flamingos (it turned out there were no flamingos at that better spot). One interesting fact about the area we cycle through that day (Chicxulub) is that it is the place where the meteorite hit the earth 65 million years ago- a collision that wiped out most dinosaurs and much of the life on Earth. Once in Telchac, Mexico we went swimming and had seafood lunch which was included in our tour. Mostly only breakfast was included in the tour. The lunch consisted of squid with shrimp, tortilla chips and local fish. The fish even had the fish heads. Great lunch, I walked along the beach and saw cool

birds (Pelican, seagulls and comrades). Then we drove to Izamal (The ‘Yellow City’), Mexico and walked up the pyramids (3rd largest in Mexico), Then we walked to the convent (Convento de San Antonio de Padua) and then to the hotel. I started getting congested, no water at the hotel, had to buy bottled water. I went and got some decongestion and I was feeling better immediately after taking the pill. Then I assume it was allergies, but the congestion and coughing continue throw-out my trip and at home in Portland. (Daily bike miles 26.6 miles; Total trip bike miles 44.8 miles)

Day 6, Tuesday, January 14, 2025

We woke up around 6:20 AM and started cycling towards Xcajum Cenote. We made it most of the way there before the van picked us up and drove the rest of the way. Once we arrived, we went for a swim. Kevin jumped off a ledge in the middle of the Cenote wall three times. After a little hesitation, I finally worked up the nerve to jump once, but quickly realized it might not be the smartest move for someone my age. I ended up buying several souvenirs at Xcajum Cenote before we drove to Valladolid. This town is Yucatán’s third-largest city, Valladolid is famous for its peaceful streets and vibrant pastel-colored buildings. We took a quick tour of the city and visited Casa de Los Venados, a private home-turned-museum. The house belongs to a U.S. citizen who has collected thousands of art pieces and wanted to share them with the public. He still lives part-time in the house. Afterward, we walked around the city, had dinner, and then I went to sleep around midnight. (Daily bike miles 24.7 miles; Total trip bike miles 69.5 miles)

Day 7, Wednesday, January 15, 2025

I woke up around 6:40 AM because I forgot to set the alarm the night before. I was supposed to get up at 6:30 AM. The van then drove us to Panabá, Mexico, and from there, we cycled to the Rio Lagartos Biosphere Reserve. On the way, we rode through the semi-evergreen Yucatán Forest and passed by traditional local villages. When we reached Rio Lagartos, we took a boat tour through the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which is known for its diverse ecosystems and large variety of bird species. The lagoon is one of the best places in the Yucatán for birdwatching, with over 400 bird species recorded, including the largest colony of American Flamingos. We also saw crocodiles, horseshoe crabs and other interesting birds, though, unfortunately, there weren’t any flamingos that day. Supposedly a storm had changed the flamingos in land. After the boat trip, we had lunch. I ordered lobster, it was expensive and didn’t compare to Maine lobster. I should’ve gone for the coconut shrimp, which had bigger portions and were cheaper. Afterward, we headed back to our hotel in Valladolid, where I spent some time working on my journal. (Daily bike miles 26.2 miles; Total trip bike miles 95.7 miles)

Day 8, Thursday, January 16, 2025

I woke up around 6:10 AM and had breakfast. Afterward, we loaded up the van and headed to Nuevo Xcan. From there, we cycled to the Cobá archaeological site. Cobá is deep in the forest, and many of its temples are still hidden under a thick blanket of tropical vines, palms, and tree roots. Archaeologists believe Cobá was one of the most significant sites on the Yucatán Peninsula. The site remains largely unexcavated, making it a fascinating place to explore. The

name "Cobá" means "waters stirred by the wind," which is fitting, as the settlement is surrounded by two large lagoons. Once we arrived, we rented bikes (since we couldn't bring our own) and cycled around the site to visit a couple of pyramids. We saw Nohoch Mul, one of the tallest Mayan temples in the region. Before 2020, you could climb to the top of Nohoch Mul, but due to COVID and social distancing measures, they no longer allow climbing Nohoch Mul pyramid. After exploring Cobá, we drove to Tulum and checked into our room. My sandals weren't smelling too great, and Bernie made a point to complain about my feet. He's a nice guy, but he does like to voice his opinions. Most people would probably enjoy having him as a roommate, but I think I'd prefer not to share a room. That said, splitting the cost was definitely a better deal, and I was able to put up with him for the week. We had a good time chatting and having beers together. Bernie's a better traveler than I am, and he was fun to hang out with. (Daily bike miles 21 miles; Total trip bike miles 116.7 miles)

Day 9, Friday, January 17, 2025

I woke up around 7:15 AM, my alarm didn't go off—I forgot to change the time after the time change the previous day. Bernie's alarm went off, and he complained about the noise. I checked my alarm and phone, but it wasn't my noise. Then Bernie realized it was his alarm that was making the noise. Thankfully, he had set his alarm, because if we had relied on mine, we would have been an hour late. After that, we had breakfast, and they drove us to the Tulum archaeological site. We toured the amazing Mayan ruins with our guide, then had some time to explore the site on our own. Tulum's ruins are dramatically situated on a cliff overlooking the turquoise Caribbean Sea and a white-sand beach. It was the last major city built and inhabited by the Mayans between the 13th and 15th centuries and was a center of worship for the Great Descending God, whose image is found on the temples there. Tulum was also a key location for sea trade, with tribes from all over Mexico and Central America coming for commerce. The massive wall around the city was said to have been built to protect it from rival traders and pirates who coveted its prime location.

Afterward, we headed to Playa del Carmen and checked into our rooms. We had drinks, and I thought we'd accidentally left without paying. Marie ended up paying, and I reimbursed her for my share. When I spoke with her later, I found out she had actually paid before we left—some of us had noticed she paid. Then, I went for a walk with Bergie to check out the ferry to Cozumel for the next day and looked at snorkeling tours. I wanted to do more research before signing up for a snorkeling tour, but the staff said I had to book in advance. I was hesitant, but Bernie convinced me to go ahead and book. In the end, booking the snorkeling trip was the best decision, as it made me leave earlier the next morning than I would have otherwise. We returned to our hotel and I worked on computer stuff and packed my luggage. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 116.7 miles)

Day 10, Saturday, January 18, 2025

I woke up around 6:20 AM and kept the lights off while packing to avoid waking Bernie. I went to breakfast at 7:00 AM and was trying to figure out WhatsApp to figure out my boat details. Lyle told me I just needed to add a contact, then I could message someone on WhatsApp. I thought I had to do that for my snorkeling trip. I was in a rush and couldn't get it working the

way Lyle showed me. I ended up leaving the group and felt like I should've taken a later snorkel trip. In hindsight, though, I was glad I left early.

When I was checking out of the hotel, I asked if they could hold my bags while I went on my snorkeling trip, but they said they had no place to store baggage. Eventually, I convinced them to let me keep my same room (I had paid separately for a second night) and store my bags there. By then, I was running close to the time for my ferry. I hurriedly left the hotel, and while walking, a woman on a bike dropped her lock. I started yelling and chasing after her. A police officer on a motorcycle stopped to check what I was doing. I handed him the lock, and he chased her down on his motorcycle to return her lock.

When I asked the tour company about WhatsApp, they told me I didn't need to connect there for the snorkel tour. The day before, when I paid, the lady said I would need to use WhatsApp for trip details. She even showed me a map and said once we connected on WhatsApp, she'd send more information.

I then caught the ferry to Cozumel and easily found my tour boat. It turned out small boats kept arriving at the dock, and you'd hand your ticket to the main guy, who'd call your name and let you board the next boat. Each boat carried about 15 people. They took us to a spot about 30 feet deep for snorkeling and took photos of us with the fish. The reef wasn't as impressive as I expected. Then we went to a 10-foot-deep spot with starfish, where they took photos of us near the starfish. After that, we went to a 4-foot-deep area with stingrays swimming by our feet, and they fed us a tortilla chip lunch with beer. Then they took us back to the dock in Cozumel. On the ferry ride back to Playa del Carmen, I posted my last comment to the cycle Mexico group. Bernie sent me WhatsApp message about meeting for a beer. We met up for pizza and beer when I returned to my hotel room. Afterward, I walked down 5th Avenue in Playa del Carmen until about 11:00 PM, soaking in the crowds, music, and gift shops. I bought some souvenirs and then went back to the hotel, where I went to sleep a little after midnight. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 116.7 miles)

Day 11, Sunday, January 19, 2025

I woke up around 7:30 AM and headed out to grab breakfast. After pouring my coffee, I was informed that I hadn't paid for breakfast—I had assumed it was included with the room. I decided to go ahead and pay the additional fee for breakfast. Then I spent time journaling until it was time to check out of my hotel at noon. After checking out, I walked to the bus station and caught the bus to the Cancún airport. The ride was smooth, and luckily, I had already figured out which terminal to go to. I arrived with plenty of time, but the international terminal was packed, and there wasn't much space to move around. There were no drinking fountains, and the lines for water and snacks were long. I boarded the plane without any issues, and easily found a spot for my carry-on luggage. The flight was good, and on time. I had a short 1 hour, 8-minute layover in Salt Lake City (SLC). I was worried I might not make it through customs and security in time, but I dashed straight from my plane to customs and beat the line. I made it through in just a few minutes, the fastest I've ever gotten through! Then I breezed through security and made it to my gate 30 minutes before boarding started. What a lucky connection! The flight to Portland was smooth, and I landed around 11:00 PM. I then rushed to the Max station at the airport and caught one of the last trains toward my house. I arrived home around midnight. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 116.7 miles)