



Structure VIII at Calakmul

palace standing to the east of the Great Plaza, he came across a royal tomb harboring the remains of one of Calakmul's early kings surrounded by offerings that included elaborately decorated pottery, thousands of shell beads, pearls and three exquisite jade mosaic masks still clinging to the ruler's skeleton.

These treasures are now displayed in the Fuerte de San Miguel, a Spanish colonial fort and archaeological museum in the city of Campeche, which is another UNESCO World Heritage site.

It's easy to spend several hours wandering around the rambling archaeological site. In addition to the many temples, altars and compact plazas, there is a ball court with a stela bearing the faded likeness of a player of the sacred ball game that was popular throughout the Maya region. On the edge of the city sprawls a labyrinthine structure known as Los Baños. Its maze of now-roofless rooms once contained steam baths encircling a pool where Calakmul's nobles no doubt took refuge from the tropical heat.

A memorable way to end your visit is to scale the steep stairway that leads up the face of Structure II. Archaeologists discovered Calakmul's oldest stela – dated 431 A.D. – on the summit of this colossal building. The panoramic view from the top is probably much the same as the one enjoyed by Calakmul's priests and kings. On a clear day, you might glimpse the pyramids of El Mirador, an ancient Maya city in northern Guatemala, poking through a carpet of pristine rainforest unfurling all the way to the horizon.



THE NEWS GRAPHICS

GETTING THERE

Take time out to visit this archaeological treasure. The site has not been cleared of its natural vegetation, so its monuments are virtually still a part of the jungle that encompasses it.

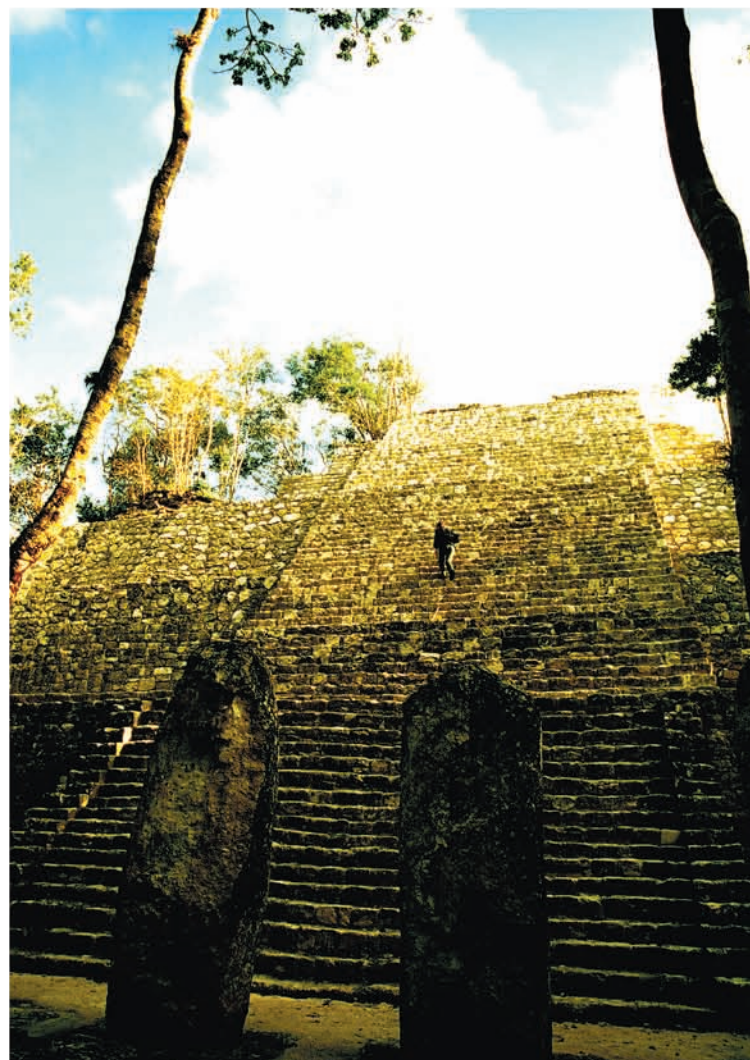
Calakmul can be reached by rental car or on organized tours from either **Campeche** or **Mérida** in the state of **Yucatán**.

A convenient place to stay is the **Chicanná Ecovillage** (Tel. 981-811-1618; Web site: www.chicannaecovillageresort.com), an environmentally friendly resort

located on Highway 186 in **Xipujil** near the turnoff to the ruins.

Calakmul archaeological site

- Open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Admission is 40 pesos.
- Be sure to take along bottled water, protection from the sun, as well as binoculars for spotting birds and other wildlife.



A person climbs Structure VII at the Maya ruins of Calakmul.

Writer: Emigrants to U.S. are heroes of modern Mexico

BY LAURA GONZÁLEZ DE ARTAZA
Efe

Mexican writer Pedro Ángel Palou, the author of three novels about leading figures in Mexican history – Emiliano Zapata, José María Morelos and Aztec ruler Cuauhtémoc – said in an interview this week with Efe that “emigrants to the United States are writing the modern Mexican epic.”

“It’s a terrible type of heroism because no one would want it; Mexico is becoming a ghost republic” because more and more Mexicans are emigrating all the time, he said.

A total of 11 million Mexicans live in the United States, half of whom are undocumented, and an estimated 500,000 Mexicans cross the border illegally each year.

Palou said emigration is an epic story because “the same Mexican who doesn’t struggle here, who lives off handouts from the state ... completely changes” once in the United States.

“You ask any person there and Mexican is synonymous with ‘hard worker,’ someone ... who resists, who struggles, even though that same Mexican here doesn’t do the same,” he said. This is because Mexico began as a executive-focused, patriarchal state founded on welfare state principles, he said, adding that this system doesn’t work anymore because it was based on a “myth of the country’s abundance” that no longer corresponds to reality.

The writer currently is promoting his latest novel, “Cuauhtémoc,” which tells of the fall of the Aztec empire at the hands of Spanish conquistadors.

Cuauhtémoc, the son of Ahuizotl, succeeded Montezuma at the head of the Aztec Empire and led the last resistance to the conquering army headed by Hernán Cortés (1485-

1547) at the battle of Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City), where he was defeated.

“Cuauhtémoc was not only a loser but his failure was the biggest in Mexican history because it meant the end of a civilization,” Palou said.

Palou said his novel makes it clear that Montezuma fell not only because of the arrival of the Spaniards but also because of the groundswell of discontent among his people.

He said that Montezuma’s ambition led to a change in the concept of warfare.

Whereas previously wars had been fought to capture prisoners and offer them to the gods, a death considered honorable, under Montezuma that changed and adversaries were killed on the battlefield without honor, angering the Aztecs’ enemies.

“[Cuauhtémoc’s] failure was the biggest in Mexican history ...”

“Had the Spaniards not arrived, a revolution would have done away with the emperor” and that would have also meant the end of Aztec civilization, if not totally, then at least enough to break it apart as occurred with the Mayas,” he said.

Palou said that what Cuauhtémoc really did was head a priestly revolt against Montezuma.

With the book, Palou has brought an end to his trilogy on leading Mexican figures that also includes “Zapata” and “Morelos.”

The author said he has not ruled out the possibility of returning to the historical fiction genre, but that if he does he would analyze Mexico from the point of view of foreigners who traveled across the country, such as German scientist Alexander Humboldt.

‘The Wrestler’ wins Venice Fest’s top award

ASSOCIATED PRESS

VENICE, Italy - Darren Aronofsky’s “The Wrestler” has won the top award at the Venice Film Festival.

The film awarded the Golden Lion on Saturday stars Mickey Rourke as a wrestler forced into retirement who strikes up a romance with an aging stripper played by Marisa Tomei.

Russia’s Aleksey German Jr. won the award for best director for

“Bumaznyj Soldat” (“Paper Soldier”), a story set in the early days of the space program in the Soviet Union.

Italian Silvio Orlando was crowned best actor for his role in Pupi Avati’s “Il Papa di Giovanna,” (“Giovanna’s Father”), about a father’s relationship with his adult daughter. France’s Dominique Blanc won best actress for playing a jealousy-struck woman in “L’Autre” (“The Other One”), directed by Patrick Marber and Pierre Trividic.