Port of Call: Costa Maya, Mexico

Costa Maya, Mexico, is a small tourist area with a port for cruise ships. Melvin and Morris are posing for a picture on the dock overlooking the left side of the port. Many of the buildings around the port have thatched roofs made of dried palm leaves.

The Costa Maya region covers about 100 kilometers (62 miles) of coastline in Quintana Roo. It includes two villages: Mahahual and Xcalak. Xcalak is pronounced “Sh-ka-lak.” The pictures on this page both show the coastline which is made of brownish-black limestone rock.
Costa Maya is located in the state of Quintana Roo, in Mexico. Mexico is divided into 31 different states. These are called the United Mexican States. Quintana Roo is one of the three Mexican states located on the Yucatan Peninsula. The other two are Campeche and Yucatan. Quintana Roo is the state on the right, or eastern side, of the Yucatan peninsula shown on the map. Quintana Roo is the only Mexican state that is bordered by the Caribbean Sea. There are two important cruise ship ports in this state: Costa Maya and Cozumel. Cozumel is the tiny island towards the top of the peninsula on the eastern side.

An interesting fact about the port at Costa Maya is that it was created by the Mexican government so that cruise ships would come to this area. The Mexican government worked with the cruise ship companies to build a large dock and a shopping mall. They knew that tourists would come ashore from the ships and spend money. This would create many jobs for people who lived there. The Mexican people could sell items in stores and take tourists on trips to see interesting places in the Costa Maya area. Restaurants and hotels would be built...
and many people could have jobs working in them, too. All of these new jobs would help the Mexican people earn money. In 2001, the first ships arrived. In 2007, the port was nearly destroyed by Hurricane Dean. It was closed for 14 months so that it could be repaired and rebuilt. By the end of 2008 cruise ships began to visit Costa Maya again. Today, about 600 ships visit the port each year.

This picture shows the pool in the center of the port’s shopping mall. It is surrounded on three sides by stores! The big pink building is a restaurant where people can have lunch, or a snack, and watch the beach and waves while they eat.

Almost all of the tours you can take at Costa Maya meet in front of the shopping mall. Guides (people who take you on the trips and explain what you are seeing) hold up signs for each tour. All of the people going on each tour get in line behind their guide. When it is time to go, the guide leads his or her group through the mall and out to the back parking lot where tour buses wait. The guide makes sure all of the tourists are on the bus before it leaves.
Name: __________________________________

Directions: Use the information on pages 1-3 to answer the questions below:

1. What are the names of the three Mexican states located on the Yucatan Peninsula?
   ______________________________________________________________

2. Quintana Roo is the state found on the ______side of the Yucatan Peninsula.
   A. southern
   B. northern
   C. western
   D. eastern

3. Why did the Mexican government create the Port of Costa Maya?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

4. How is Quintana Roo DIFFERENT from all other Mexican states?
   A. It is the largest of all Mexican states.
   B. All other Mexican states are visited by many tourists each year.
   C. One of its borders is the Caribbean Sea.
   D. It is the only Mexican state that is near an ocean.

5. Why was the port of Costa Maya closed for 14 months?
   A. It needed to have a bigger dock and more stores built.
   B. It needed to be repaired and rebuilt before cruise ships could come back.
   C. Cruise ships decided to stop at different ports instead of Costa Maya.
   D. The government worked with the cruise ship companies to make a shopping mall.
6. Read this sentence from the text: “Almost all of the **tours** you can take at Costa Maya meet in front of the shopping mall.”

**The word **tours** in this sentence means the same as…**
A. kinds of transportation you can take in Costa Maya  
B. vacations you can take in Mexico  
C. short trips you can take to see interesting things  
D. people who visit different countries

7. Which of the following best describes why the author wrote *Port of Call: Costa Maya, Mexico*?
A. to inform the reader about where the port of Costa Maya is located  
B. to teach the reader important facts about the port of Costa Maya  
C. to tell the reader why the port of Costa Maya was created  
D. to persuade the reader to take a cruise to Costa Maya

8. Read the last paragraph on page 3. **How is a tour guide like a teacher?**

____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

9. Which of the following means the **OPPOSITE** of **create**?
A. repair  
B. border  
C. include  
D. destroy

10. Which of the following happened **BEFORE** the first cruise ships arrived in Costa Maya?
A. Hurricane Dean nearly destroyed the port.  
B. The Mexican government and cruise ship companies worked together.  
C. The port was closed for 14 months for repairs and rebuilding.  
D. Cruise ships began to visit Costa Maya in 2008.
Costa Maya’s Villages: Mahahual and Xcalak

Mahahual is a small fishing village. About 200 people live there. It is located about 2 miles from the port, whereas Xcalak is farther away - about 37 miles south of the port. New restaurants, stores and hotels have been built in Mahahual since the port of Costa Maya was created. When the cruise ships come, the village becomes very busy! Although the village has many new buildings, other people in the Costa Maya area live in small, more traditional houses.

About 400 people live in Xcalak. Most people make their living by fishing. Tourists like to go to Xcalak because there are many places to dive underwater and see coral reefs and shipwrecks. All dive spots are along the Meso-American reef which is almost 1,000 kilometers long. There is also a very famous coral atoll 30 kilometers off the coast of Xcalak. An atoll is a ring shaped coral reef that surrounds a shallower lagoon of water in its center.

The coral atoll is named Banco Chinchorro. It is the largest atoll in the northern hemisphere. Banco Chinchorro is oval in shape and covers an area of 800 square kilometers. No one lives on the coral atoll, which is made up of three islands: Cayo Norte, Cayo Central, and Cayo Lobos. There is only a guard base there to protect the atoll and its visitors. The Mexican Government has made the atoll an Archeological Marine Sanctuary. This means that it is a place where no
animals, plants, or items (artifacts) from shipwrecks can be removed. The coral atoll is a very safe place for plants and animals to live. Plant life is very diverse, or varied, there. Sea turtles and birds lay their eggs on the beaches. Crocodiles and iguanas can also be seen on the atoll. There are many underwater shipwrecks on the east side of the atoll. These happened because the atoll is not easy to see from a ship, especially at night or during a storm. People cannot dive into the shipwrecks, but they can snorkle and explore them from above.

One of the most interesting things about the atoll is the difference in water depth, inside, outside and around the atoll. The water in the lagoon inside the atoll is only about 5 meters deep. The water just outside the atoll is 3 - 40 meters deep, but the sea surrounding the atoll is up to 1,000 meters deep!

Divers love to explore the atoll because there are many types of fish and sea creatures they can see underwater. The pictures below show a few kinds of animals that might be seen underwater on the coral atoll. These may not look exactly the same as the ones that live there, but they are examples of what a diver might see.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parrot fish</th>
<th>Sea anemone</th>
<th>Blue tang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barracuda</th>
<th>Moray eel in a coral “cave”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Directions: Use the information on pages 6 & 7 to answer the questions below:

1. Why were new restaurants, stores and hotels built in Mahahual?

____________________________________________________________

2. How are Mahahual and Xcalak ALIKE?

A. About the same number of people live in both villages.
B. Tourists go to both villages to see coral reefs and shipwrecks.
C. Both villages located about 2 miles from the port of Costa Maya.
D. People in both villages make their living by fishing.

3. Why is Banco Chinchorro a safe place for animals and plants to live?

____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

4. Read this sentence from the text, “Plant life is very diverse, or varied, there.” This means that you could expect to find….

A. many different types of plants
B. a plant that has many different colors
C. many plants that look the same
D. a plant that changes many times during the year

5. Use the information on page 7 to label water depths inside, outside and around the atoll on the picture below:
Answer Keys: Pages 4 & 5:

1. Quintana Roo, Campeche and Yucatan
2. D. eastern
3. Possible Answer: The Mexican government created the Port of Costa Maya so that cruise ships would come and visit the area. This would create many jobs for the people who lived there. Tourists would spend money in the shops, restaurants and hotels.
4. C. One of its borders is the Caribbean Sea.
5. B. It needed to be repaired and rebuilt before cruise ships could come back.
6. C. short trips you can take to see interesting things
7. B. To teach the reader important facts about the port of Costa Maya.
8. A tour guide is like a teacher because a teacher leads lines of students from one place to another and makes sure they safely get to their destination. A teacher tells students interesting things when they go on field trips and makes sure they all get onto the bus safely. Tour guides lead their group from one place to another, make sure they get onto the bus safely and explain interesting things to people when they go on tours.
9. D. Destroy
10. B. The Mexican government and cruise ship companies worked together.

Answer Keys: Pages 8:

1. Because the Port of Costa Maya was created.
2. D. People in both villages make their living by fishing
3. Possible answer: Banco Chinchorro a safe place for animals and plants to live because the Mexican government has made it an archeological Marine Preserve which means that people are not allowed to hunt or take any animals, plants or artifacts from the atoll.
4. A. many different types of plants
5. Use the information on page 7 to label water depths inside, outside and around the atoll on the picture below: (possible answer:)

![Diagram of water depths around Banco Chinchorro]

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