

Guatemala & Belize

Guatemala, the Mayan heart of Central America, is blessed with spectacular scenery, picturesque colonial towns and a fascinating indigenous culture. From the heavily forested Mayan ruins of Tikal, the magical Lake Atitlán and the lively indian market at Chichicastenango, to the colonial gem of Antigua, a UNESCO World Heritage Site surrounded by spectacular volcanoes, the country offers a huge variety of holiday experiences.

Neighbouring Belize has an incredible range of landscapes, from mountainous rainforests to coastal wetlands and tiny coral cayes. Perfect for those with an interest in nature as well as beach lovers, its British heritage and laid-back Caribbean way of life offers a great contrast to Guatemala.



Antigua

Nestled between three dramatic volcanoes, Antigua is one of the most beautiful cities in the Americas. Located just an hour's drive from Guatemala City, magnificent Antigua has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with cobbled streets winding past colourful colonial buildings and charming plazas. As well as stunning monasteries and cathedrals, there is an outstanding variety of restaurants and popular bars, whereas the surrounding coffee farms and quaint Mayan villages make for a great day excursion.

Lake Atitlán & Chichicastenango

Surrounded by breathtaking volcanoes and traditional Mayan villages, Lake Atitlán is a magical, deep-blue volcanic crater lake best explored by boat. Each village clinging onto the mountain-side or lake shore has its particular characteristics, fiestas and markets and it is here that you see the blazing colours of Mayan dress. Not to be missed is a visit to the nearby highland region to experience the famous Chichicastenango market where villagers come to sell their very colourful textiles, flowers and fruit. You will be amazed by the harmonious mix of ancient Mayan tradition, mysticism and modern religion.

Tikal & Yaxhá National Park

For many the main draw to Guatemala, Tikal is one of the most spiritually powerful spots on earth with its towering Mayan pyramids looming out of the thick jungle canopy. More than 3000 structures include palaces, ceremonial platforms and avenues, whereas roaring howler monkeys, squawking parrots and toucans provide nature's soundtrack to all visitors in the area. Yaxhá, the lesser visited, atmospheric Mayan site is equally rich with wildlife and is especially picturesque at sunset. Gateway to both national parks is the charming town of Flores with its scenic location on Lake Petén Itza.

Guatemala Travel Tips

- **Time:** GMT -6
 - **Flying Time from UK:** Approx 11 hrs to Guatemala City.
 - **Language:** The official language is Spanish. English is spoken in most of the larger hotels and tourist areas.
 - **Currency:** Guatemala Quetzal (GTQ) £1 = GTQ 14.56.
 - **Visa Requirements:** Visa not required by UK passport holders for tourist stays of up to 90 days.
 - **Festivals, Events & Busy Times:** Numerous local events and national holidays occur throughout the year including Holy Easter Week (Mar/Apr), Independence Day (15Sep), Todos Los Santos Celebrations (Saint Day) (01 Nov) and Festival of Saint Tomas in Chichicastenango (Dec). Christmas, New Year and Easter are the main holidays in Guatemala so book well in advance.
 - **Departure Tax:** Guatemala - US\$30 for international, USD\$5 for domestic departures (subject to change).
 - **Tourist Office:** Contact the Embassy of Guatemala, 13 Fawcett Street, London SW10 9HN, Tel: 0207 351 3042, <http://guatemala.embassyhomepage.com>
- For more useful information, see pages 96-97.



Tours for Independent Travellers

Guatemala - Maya, Magic and Mystery

8 Days from £725 (excludes flights)

Highlights Include

- Spend three nights in the lovely colonial surroundings of Antigua
- Visit the traditional indigenous market at Chichicastenango
- Take a boat ride on the placid Lake Atitlán
- Enjoy a sunset tour to the amazing Yaxha ruins
- Tour the jungle-shrouded Mayan ruins at Tikal to the sounds of howler monkeys and colourful tropical birds

Departures: Mon, Wed, Thur & Sun

Day 1: Arrive Guatemala City - Antigua

On arrival in Guatemala City, you will be met and transferred directly to the charming town of Antigua. Its pretty cobbled streets are lined with colourful houses and churches, and the town is overlooked by three dramatic volcanoes. Stay in the heart of the town for three nights.

Standard: Posada de Don Rodrigo, Antigua

Deluxe: Panza Verde

Day 2: Antigua Sightseeing

Enjoy a private tour of Antigua this morning and discover some of its 47 churches, monasteries and convents, including San Francisco Church, La Merced Church and the Cathedral. There are many excellent restaurants, bars and cafes to explore in the evening. **(B)**

Day 3: Antigua at Leisure

Today will be at leisure to enjoy Antigua and its stunning surroundings. Take an optional hike up the active Pacaya volcano where on occasions you can see small eruptions and lava flow at an incredibly close distance. Alternatively, visit Jocotenango village and Azotea Coffee Farm to learn about the history and production of Guatemala's most important crop, or participate in one of our sustainable tours (not included; please enquire about prices). **(B)**

Day 4: Antigua - Lake Atitlán

Your guide will meet you this morning for a transfer to beautiful Lake Atitlán. Take a private boat tour across the magical lake to the town of Santiago, enjoying spectacular views of the lake and the surrounding volcanoes. Santiago is an interesting town where the local Mayan community still follow their traditional religion and produce beautiful woven goods. Return by boat to your hotel. **(BL)**

Standard: Posada de Don Rodrigo, Panajachel

Deluxe: Casa Palopo

Day 5: Lake Atitlán - Chichicastenango - Tikal

Pick-up from your hotel for a private transfer to the fabulous Mayan market at Chichicastenango which is famous throughout Guatemala for the range and quality of the handicrafts on sale. You may also visit the main square to see Mayan rituals being performed in the Catholic cathedral. This afternoon enjoy a private transfer to Guatemala City airport for your short domestic flight (not



Lake Atitlán

included) to the picturesque town of Flores, then transfer to your hotel for a two-night stay. **(B)**

Standard: Casona del Lago

Deluxe: Camino Real Tikal

Day 6: Yaxha Mayan Ruins Sunset Tour

Afternoon transfer to Yaxha National Park for a private guided tour of this lesser visited, yet atmospheric Mayan site. Enjoy the sights and sounds of the howler monkeys as well as the many tropical birds in this area. Sunset drinks and snacks are then served at the end of the tour on top of the main temple with amazing views over the surrounding rainforest and nearby Lake Yaxha. Walk back through the jungle with torches as it starts to turn dark, perhaps spotting some nocturnal wildlife along the way. **(B)**

Day 7: Tikal National Park - Guatemala City

This morning visit Guatemala's most famous cultural and natural preserve and the largest excavated site in the Americas, Tikal. Enjoy a tour of this magical Mayan temple complex, where steep-sided pyramids poke out through the thick jungle canopy. You can climb some of the huge pyramids, as well as visit the royal palace, numerous ball courts and the Plaza of the Lost World. Lunch will be at a restaurant in the park before your return to Flores for your flight (not included) to Guatemala City. **(BL)**

Standard: Biltmore Express

Deluxe: Camino Real Guatemala City

Day 8: Depart Guatemala City

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight. **(B)**

Days 5 & 6 may be switched, depending on Chichicastenango market days.



Belize Beach Extension



Beach at Victoria House Hotel

Extend your tour with a few relaxing nights on the stunning white sand beaches of Ambergris Caye. As an extension to the Maya, Magic & Mystery tour, stay overnight in Flores on Day 7, before your flight to Belize City the next morning (not included) and connecting flight to Ambergris Caye. Spend four days relaxing in the exotic island paradise.

Standard accommodation: Ramon's Village, 61 thatched-roof cabanas hidden beneath palms and bougainvillea, adjacent to a lagoon-style pool.

Deluxe accommodation: Victoria House, a small and intimate, award-winning resort with 42 beautiful rooms and exclusive pool villas, in lush tropical gardens.

Prices from £318 per person for Standard accommodation (Beachfront room) and £451 per person for Deluxe accommodation (Plantation room).

Based on three nights twin share, including breakfast, return domestic flights from Belize City to Ambergris Caye and return road transfers in Ambergris Caye.

Prices Include

- Accommodation as shown in itinerary
- Meals as specified (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Most transfers and touring on private basis
- Services of an English-speaking guide whilst touring

Prices Exclude

- All flights and local airport taxes.
- Drinks, gratuities and items of a personal nature

Tour Prices

Prices per person, in £'s from	Maya, Magic & Mystery			
	Standard		Deluxe	
	Twin	Single	Twin	Single
01Jan09-31Dec09	725	1285	879	1665
01Jan10-31Mar10	795	1415	969	1829

Supplements apply during Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas & New Years, please call for details.



Tikal ruins