

Guatemala

Newsletter

Sept 2018



Revealing Guatemala

Guatemala is one of Central America's most colourful, exciting and interesting countries with much to offer the modern sophisticated traveller. Explore colonial Antigua, wander the vibrant traditional market of Chichicastenango, visit coffee plantations and local workshops to talk to artisans and craftsmen about their work, climb a volcano and peer into its depths, be amazed at the variety of bird and animal life, be awed by Lake Atitlan and impressed by the ancient Mayan pyramids. We recommend you also visit Copan, just over the border in Honduras.

Guatemala makes a great combination with English-speaking Belize, particularly if you wish to spend a few days relaxing on the white sand beaches and crystal-clear waters of the Caribbean and enjoy a spot of snorkelling or world-class diving in the coral cayes of Belize's important barrier reef.

Another popular combination is with Mexico, particularly if you are interested in exploring more of the Mayan world travelling from Tikal to Palenque, for example and taking in Chichen Itza, Uxmal and Tulum.

Guatemala can also be easily combined with El Salvador, Central America's smallest country, which has fantastic scenery, enormous charm and Joya de Ceren, a Mayan village destroyed by a volcanic eruption in the 7th Century and only rediscovered in 1976.

Guatemala Revealed: Tailor-made travel from specialists in Central America.

Getting there:

There are no direct flights to Guatemala. Iberia has a daily flight via Madrid. KLM has a daily flight via Amsterdam and Panama. United and American Airlines offer daily connections via the USA which inevitably means passing through US immigration. We can arrange stopovers in Miami, Houston, Dallas or New York as necessary.

Please contact us for flights which combine neighbouring countries: You could fly into Guatemala City, for example, and back from San Salvador, Belize, Cancun or Mexico City.

Getting about:

We book airport-hotel transfers, city tours, excursions, internal transfers and local flights (e.g. Guatemala to Flores) according to your needs together with all ground arrangements and hotels from luxury hideaways and five star boutique accommodation to three star lodges.

Antigua

The former capital is one of the very best preserved Spanish colonial cities in Central America and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979. There are fantastic views from the Cerro de la Cruz hill and Pacaya volcano is just an hour away. We recommend visiting the markets, local artisan and craft workshops. Many passengers prefer to stay in a converted colonial house with centuries of atmosphere and charm rather than a more modern hotel.



Chichicastenango

The famous Chichicastenango Market takes place on Thursdays and Sundays and is impressively colourful, intensely crowded and immensely interesting. The entire centre of town gets taken over by market stalls selling intricate weavings, pottery, jewellery and crafts.

We recommend you sample some food from one of the hot food stalls, take a look at the flower market at the 400 year old Santo Tomas church and wherever you go, beware of pickpockets.

Lake Atitlan

Lake Atitlan is delightfully calm and serene and is surrounded by three volcanoes which tower over the lake and provide an impressive backdrop. It is worth spending a few days exploring the towns and attractive little villages which dot the shoreline. Panajachel and Santiago Atitlan are the main towns, San Pedro and San Juan La Laguna are both rather lovely and if you are in San Marcos La Laguna do visit the café and community project supported by the Latin America Travel Association's charity, the LATA Foundation.



Tikal

Tikal is one of the most important, impressive and fascinating of the sites in the ancient Mayan world and appears to have flourished from around 350BC to 830AD. The central part of the ancient city contains some 3,000 buildings and covers 10 square miles.

Recent studies suggest that the Mayan world was far more established and interconnected than previously thought. A visit to Tikal is a must for the first time visitor to Guatemala.

Lago Izabal, Rio Dulce and Livingston

The Rio Dulce connects Lago Izabal with the Garifuna town of Livingston on the Caribbean coast. Amongst the highlights are the San Felipe fortress, built in 1652 by the Spanish to ward off (British) pirates, and the sheer limestone cliffs of the El Boqueron canyon. If travelling from Copan (Honduras) we recommend a stop at the lesser known Mayan site of Quirigua on the way to Lago Izabal.



Suggested Itinerary:

Days 1-3: Antigua
Days 4-5: Lake Atitlan & the Markets
Day 6: Antigua
Days 7-8: Copan (Honduras)
Days 9-11: Rio Dulce and Livingston
Days 12-14: Flores and Tikal
Day 15: Guatemala City

Please contact us to discuss options to combine Guatemala with Belize, Mexico or other Central American countries.

Seasons and Climate:

The dry season is from December to April is the best time to visit. The wettest months are June to October. May and November are interim seasons.

Entry Requirements:

British Nationals with a full, valid passport do not require a visa to travel to Guatemala. Travellers should make sure passports are valid for at least 6 months from the date of arrival into all Central American countries. If travelling via the USA most British passengers will be able to qualify for an ESTA on their Visa Waiver Programme

<https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>

Vaccinations:

Whilst nothing is compulsory for travel to Guatemala you are advised to check your immunizations for Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid and Hepatitis A.

Costs:

Prices will vary according to season of travel, the standard of accommodation and whether we are booking travel arrangements for you on a private basis or as part of a group tour. Please contact us to discuss your arrangements. In general terms Guatemala represents very good value with a two week holiday starting at around £2500-£3000 per person.

Quick Facts:

Capital: Guatemala City
Area: 42,042 sq. miles (UK 93,638)
Population: 17.25 million (2017)
Main Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Catholicism
Currency: Quetzal
Time Zone: GMT -6
Gross National Income: \$8441 per capita
(Source: IMF 2018 estimate)



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Guatemala City

Guatemala City became the capital in 1775 after Antigua was destroyed by a series of earthquakes. Today it is the biggest city in Central America. It does have some attractive square and good museums (the Museo Nacional de Arqueología and Etnología is particularly noteworthy) but the city does have an unenviable reputation for lawlessness which the city authorities are beginning to address. Passengers only tend to stay here if they have an early morning flight the following day. Otherwise, Antigua is just over an hour away.



Semuc Champey – ‘where the river hides’

Semuc Champey consists of a series of six tiered pools with cascading waters and a 300m limestone bridge with an underground river system to explore by candlelight. Semuc Champey is deep in the Guatemalan jungle, is not easy to get to and not everybody’s cup of tea, but if you are up for travelling long distances on a dirt-track road, trekking through the jungle, jumping into rivers, squeezing through narrow passages in the caves and perhaps want to end the day with a bit of river-tubing, do let us know.



Social Responsibility:

We strongly believe in providing support for social and community projects in the regions where we work. In Latin America we are closely involved with the Latin America Travel Association’s own charity, the LATA Foundation.

The LATA Foundation is run entirely by volunteers. Projects are carefully vetted, assessed and monitored to ensure that funds go where they are needed most.

If you are travelling to Lake Atitlan, we recommend visiting a community project and cafe in San Marcos la Laguna which is supported by the LATA Foundation:

<https://www.latafoundation.org/projects/konojel-community-centre/>



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Further Afield



Belize:

Across the border from Tikal is the Cayo District of Belize, characterised by attractive rainforest, natural beauty and adventure activities such as zip-lining and visiting the ATM Cave.

Placencia has the best white-powder beaches on the Belize mainland and offers sea-kayaking, snorkelling and diving. Alternatively take a short flight in a small aircraft out to one of the islands in the coral cayes and Belize's important barrier reef.



El Salvador:

Central America's smallest country offers highland villages, colonial towns, golden beaches with fantastic surfing, dramatic landscapes and stunning national parks teeming with wildlife against a backdrop of a chain of 20 volcanoes. Joya de Ceren is regarded as the Pompeii of the Americas and the well-preserved excavations are helping archaeologists build a clear picture of the daily lives of people from the pre-hispanic world.



Honduras:

We thoroughly recommend a visit to Copan, just across the border from Guatemala. The sculptures here are amongst the most sophisticated and the site is one of the most important sources of information on the ancient Maya. The Copan Sculpture Museum has a full size reconstruction of the Rosalila Temple, the best-preserved structure which was only discovered at Copan in 1989. The Bay Islands off the Caribbean coast offer great diving and snorkelling whilst Pico Bonito has great treks, bird-watching and rafting.

Is Central America safe?

Whilst Costa Rica is consistently measured as being amongst the happiest nations in the world, the other six nations in Central America tend to suffer from a reputation for crime and a lingering memory of the civil wars from the 1980s and 1990s. It is certainly true that some cities are best avoided (e.g. Tegucigalpa and Belize City) and crime levels in some countries are high but it is rare for tourists to be targeted. We work closely with our ground agents locally to keep our passengers safe

Special Offers

There are some fantastic offers available at the moment with substantial discounts on selected Galapagos Cruises and up to \$2500 off early bookings for the 2019-20 season to Antarctica.

Amongst the offers are four nights for the price of three at a remote lodge in the Brazilian Amazon and at a hotel in the Ibera wetlands of Argentina.

Please see www.revealedtravel.co.uk/offers

Coming Soon: The Galapagos Islands

A journey to the Galapagos Islands will bring you literally face to face with some of the most remarkable wildlife on the planet. Galapagos cruises range from 3 nights to 2 weeks but most people stay for between four days and a week.

Our guide to the Galapagos Islands will provide information about the wildlife and the islands, the choice of yachts, cruises and options for hotels as well as practical details for combining your trip with Machu Picchu.

About Us

Revealed Travel specialises in putting together completely bespoke tailor-made holidays and itineraries throughout Central & South America and South-East Asia.

ATOL Protected and ABTA member.

A personal service and value for money from our team of travel experts.

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