



## GUATEMALA

### MAYAN HIGHLANDS & TIKAL

A Mystery-filled Visit among the Mayan Heartland, Tropical Ruins, and Spanish Colonial Culture



Expertly designed for nature-culture oriented travelers

<b>DURATION:</b>	8 days / 7 nights (Tuesday and Friday arrivals)
<b>SEASON:</b>	November through April
<b>DEPARTURES:</b>	Guaranteed with a minimum of 2 and maximum of 12 participants.
<b>TRIP RATING:</b>	Moderate nature, cultural, educational and family-friendly Tour, Grade (I): This first-class soft adventure is an activity-oriented program featuring walking tours through colonial cities and highland villages, rain forests, and Mayan sites. Also wildlife viewing, zip lining and kayaking.

**2024/25 DATES:** On request any week of the year during the travel season.

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Find the essence of Guatemala in this classic, family-friendly journey. This incredible itinerary allows you to experience all of the must-see parts of Guatemala, as you travel through a volcanic landscape painted with verdant jungles, glimmering shorelines, and rich Mayan culture. You'll explore the old Spanish colonial capital of Antigua, popular for its architecture and historic atmosphere, and also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Travel a few miles outside of city limits and explore via foot the surrounding forests and coffee plantations. Heading to the western Mayan highlands, you'll visit the small town of Chichicastenango, renowned for its colorful markets, Mayan fabrics, carvings, ceramics and other unique wares. The highlands are also home to the scenic Lake Atitlán, a breathtaking volcanic mountain lake great for relaxation and outdoor adventure. Continuing to the Mayan heartland of the Petén, you'll enjoy a relaxing stay above Petén Itzá Lake. Traveling through rain forests you'll also visit the Yaxha and Tikal ruins, two archeological sites from the ancient Mayan empire.

#### **TRIP HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Walk the cobbled streets and admire the architecture of the fabulous UNESCO World Heritage City of Antigua.
- Get a taste of highland culture with a traditional cooking class in Antigua.
- Kayak the scenic Volcano lined Lake Atitlán, hike and zip line in the nearby Atitlán Nature Reserve.
- Learn about customary methods of textile production and local folklore.
- Explore Chichicastenango's market for textiles, carvings, and other crafts.
- Visit the remarkable 400-year-old St Thomas Church embodying the combination of Mayan and Catholic traditions.
- Explore the spectacular archeological ruins of Tikal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and discover the amazing ancient Mayan civilization that once thrived here.
- Walk through the suspension bridges and look for wildlife at the Ixpanajul Park while admiring the views of the jungles and the Petén Itzá lagoon.

# Guatemala: Mayan Highlands & Tikal

## DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

### DAY 01 (TUE): TO GUATEMALA

Depart home and arrive in the afternoon to **Guatemala City** located at 4,900 ft. Meet your Southwind representative at the La Aurora International Airport (GUA) and transfer 1 hr 20 min by highway to the city of **Antigua**, the charming Spanish Colonial capital of the country. Check-in to the **El Convento Boutique Hotel**, located in the heart of this historic UNESCO World Heritage Site and across the street from the Capuchinas Convent. Established by Spanish Conquistadors in 1524, Antigua was Guatemala's capital for over two centuries. Antigua enchants visitors with its narrow cobblestone streets, tree-shaded parks and old colonial architecture. Meals are on your own today.

### DAY 02 (WED): ANTIGUA

Today starts with a guided exploration of this historic city. For many years, the Colonial City of **Antigua** was regarded as one of the major centers of Spanish power in the Americas along with Lima and Mexico City. Enormous churches monasteries and colonial mansions from the 17th and 18th century line the city's cobblestone streets. UNESCO declared Antigua patrimony to mankind in 1979. The guided tour also includes visits to The Merced Church, The San Francisco Monastery and Central Plaza. Lunch is included at Welten Restaurant in the heart of Antigua. In the afternoon we drive to the village of **Jocotenango**, just on the outskirts of the city where you can visit the wonderful Filadelfia Coffee Resort and farm dating from 1870 where we will walk next to the plantation to see the cultivation and processing of coffee. Learn about the importance of coffee in Guatemala's history and its impact today as well as hearing about the Mayan way of life. We also visit the nearby **Casa Kojom** (coffee and music museum). Then, if time allows, we walk the streets in Jocotenango and visit the shops in search of handmade woodcarvings, cloths and crafts. Returning to Antigua and arriving to the La Fonda de la Calle Real Restaurant, we participate in an hour-long cooking class including dinner. This activity is participatory, the chef will start by teaching you about the interesting mixture of Spanish and Mayan influences on Guatemalan flavors by using the best quality of meats, vegetables, herbs and spices handpicked from the local market. You'll get to experience cooking in an old-fashioned kitchen while enjoying the unique flavors of a Guatemalan treats you have help prepared. Overnight at the **El Convento Boutique Hotel**. (B,L,D)

### DAY 03 (THU): ANTIGUA / CHICHICASTENANGO / LAKE ATITLAN

Our morning starts with a 2.5 hour drive into the highlands of Guatemala. **Chichicastenango** is home to one of the most spectacular and traditional markets in the Americas. The food, crafts and goods market is operational on Thursdays and Sundays starting at 8:00 am. Here you will have a chance to buy impressive handicraft souvenirs. We will visit the 400 year old **Santo Tomas Church**, where Catholic and pagan rites take place side by side in a truly mystic atmosphere. On the steps, people praying burn copal incense. Once inside the church, they offer candles and flowers to the souls of the departed, while they call on the saints and the lords of all the natural forces. A visit to a crafts workshop is included (wood carving, masks or traditional apparel). After lunch at the restaurant of Hotel Santo Tomas, you will be transferred to **Lake Atitlán** (1 hour drive) and arrive at the **Atitlan Hotel & Gardens**. You will spend a night at this lovely hotel over Lake Atitlán (5,125'), enjoying spectacular views of the water and touring in the nearby towns. This afternoon your guide will lead you along the Hotels' lush botanical gardens teeming with roses, orchids, bougainvillea, and azaleas and looking for exotic birds and butterflies. You can also walk to the lake shore for sunset views before dinner. (B,L)

### DAY 04 (FRI): LAKE ATITLAN / GUATEMALA CITY

After refueling over a hearty breakfast, we take a boat to the lakeshore of Santa Cruz village and go kayaking on the calm waters for 1 or 1.5 hours. Next, we visit the nearby **Atitlán Nature Reserve** for about 2-3 hours where we follow nature trails and enjoy an 8-cable zip line scenic adventure. Since 2008 the Nature Reserve has been actively involved in the conservation of the Lake Basin and supports scientific research and recreation. The Reserve preserves the native flora, fauna and the natural setting for future generations. For lunch we stop at the Casablanca restaurant in the town of Panajachel. This afternoon we take a private excursion by boat to visit the town of **San Juan Laguna** (25' away). Learn about customary methods of textile production and local folklore, such as the intriguing stories surrounding Maximon, the Mayan god turned catholic saint. In this village the president of the local weaver's cooperative, Doña Socorro awaits your visit. Doña Socorro is responsible for rescuing the ancient weaving art of this region by re-introducing the use of natural dyes. Due to her weaving virtuosity, she was chosen to create the table mantel upon which Guatemala's peace accord, ending decades of civil war, was signed in 1996. She has been awarded the Order of the Quetzal, Guatemala highest civilian honor. Later on, we take our private boat back to Panajachel to arrive at 4:30pm and depart for the 3.5 hour drive to **Guatemala City** where we will overnight at the elegant **Westin Camino Real Hotel**. (B,L)

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### DAY 05 (SAT): GUATEMALA CITY / PETEN / YAXHA

Very early wake up this morning to transfer to the airport with check-in assistance for a **flight from Guatemala City to Petén/Mundo Maya airport** (FRS) at 06:25AM-07:25AM with TAG Airlines. A Southwind representative meets you on arrival, transfer together to **Flores** to enjoy some hot drinks and a light breakfast at the Capitan Tortuga restaurant. Your guide will transfer you for about 1.5 hours to The **Yaxha ruins**, the third largest Mayan site in Guatemala behind El Mirador and Tikal. The ruins are situated near Lake Yaxha. Some of the highlights include multiple pyramid temples and a Mayan observatory. The views of the lake from atop the temples also make this a highly attractive destination. The ruins at Yaxha have a lot to offer in terms of both historic interest and scenic beauty. Rising from the greenery of the Petén jungle, the city's ceremonial pyramids provide sweeping views of nearby **Lake Yaxha**. At the height of the Mayan Classical period (250-900 AD), this city was a center of both commerce and religion, and its more than 500 remaining structures include palaces, ball courts, temples and a celestial observatory. Fans of the reality show Survivor may recognize this site, as it was the featured setting for the show's 2005 season. The ruins fall within the borders of the Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo National Park, which encompasses an area of 143.5 sq. miles and incorporates the remains of four ancient Mayan cities: Yaxha, Topoxte, Nakum and Naranjo, as well as 10 intermediate sites and more than 280 smaller settlements. Lunch is in the nearby restaurant at the Eco lodge El Sombrero. After lunch, we visit Lake Yaxha. Afterwards returning towards Flores and transferring to the nearby Las Lagunas Hotel on the shore of Lake Quexil. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure to peruse the hotel facilities (pool, bicycles and kayaks) and enjoy the sunset in comfort. Overnight at **Las Lagunas boutique Hotel**. (B,L)

### DAY 6 (SUN): TIKAL

After breakfast, transfer with your guide 1 hour to enigmatic ruins of **Tikal** to explore the "City of Voices." Discover the heart of the Mayan World hidden by dense jungle until the 19th century. Tikal represents one of the most breathtaking Pre-Columbian archaeological sites. Once one of the largest and most powerful city/states of the Mayan Classic period, Tikal was abruptly and mysteriously abandoned over 1000 years ago and disappeared for centuries into the lush jungle.

The power and immensity of Tikal is experienced climbing up **Temple IV** and looking out to see distant temples protruding through the jungle canopy. Some overgrown structures have yet to be released from the jungle's vines. On top of the Lost World search out jungle inhabitants such as howler and spider monkeys playing in the trees around the temples. You can listen to the over 410 species of birds, such as toucans, that bring music to the jungle canopy. Over 3000 structures have been unearthed from Tikal so far, including temples, palaces, living quarters, ball courts, and a sauna. Enjoy lunch and a break at the restaurant of the nearby Jungle Lodge.

There are also many reliefs and stelae that have survived the centuries, all of which reveal the history of this magical city through Mayan hieroglyphs – stories about Tikal's kings, its incredible wealth, and its wars with neighboring cities. Archaeologists estimate that the 6.2 square miles that has been excavated at Tikal is only a fraction of the entire site, leaving many visitors wishing they had more time to explore this ancient and mysterious city. There is also a small museum on site with a collection of ceramics, jade, shell and bone jewelry and sculptures.

After exploring the plazas and temples, it becomes clear how Tikal became an important Mayan ceremonial center with the construction of major pyramids at its height (600-900 AD during Late Classic period). **Tikal National Park**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, contains some of the most captivating archaeological remains. This afternoon we return to the **Las Lagunas Hotel** for a restful night. (B,L)

### DAY 07 (MON): IXPANPAJUL PARK / GUATEMALA CITY

This morning we explore **Ixpanpajul Park** with a day of adventure at this 1,112 acre refuge for endemic birds, mammals, trees and plants. Ixpanpajul is an ideal for active families with suspension bridges, jungle views and the Petén Itzá lagoon. Soar through the jungle on one of five different **zip line** circuits. Horseback ride or safari to look for coati, kinkajou, peccary, deer, agouti, spider monkey, howler monkey, armadillos, lowland paca, jaguarundi and birds. The park supports and promotes different conservation and development projects for the community. Lunch is at Raices Bar & Grill or Capitan Tortuga followed by a visit to the Jungle facility of ARCAS (**Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Association**). Here, we learn how this non-profit helps rescue endangered species, including monkeys and colorful macaws. Once rehabilitated, many animals can be returned to the wild. We continue to the airport to check-in for the evening TAG Airlines **flight Petén/Mundo Maya - Guatemala City**. Upon arrival, we transfer to the familiar **Westin Camino Real Hotel** for the night. Enjoy dinner on your own this evening as a farewell to Guatemala. (B,L)

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### DAY 08 (TUE): GUATEMALA CITY / DEPARTURE

After a leisurely breakfast, depart for the international airport to board your flight home. Arrive in your gateway city this afternoon and make onward connections home. (B)

### NOTES ON THE ITINERARY:

- Although we do our best to adhere to the above schedule, this itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control, including group pace and acclimatization, weather, road, trail and lake conditions, flight delays or cancellations, as well as changes in plane schedules.
- This trip is suitable for healthy participants accustomed to outdoor activities, age 7 and up.
- Changing the dates of the week on this itinerary may affect the flow of activities as some of the visits may not be available every day. On Day 02, Casa Kojom Museum may not open on weekends, if this is the case, we'll provide other visits instead. Depending on final flight schedules, some of the activities may follow a different sequence.
- Distances and altitudes are approximate and travel times indicated do not include lunch breaks, rest stops, etc.

**2024 LAND COST for a private guided trip:** 4-6 participants: from \$4,350 p.p.d.  
7-12 participants: from \$3,900 p.p.d.  
Single Supplement: from \$1,400

2024 Land Costs are valid for departures through April 2025.

p.p.d. = per person based on double or triple occupancy not including airfare.

**Note:** End of the year or holiday departures during Easter week or between December 15 and January 06, could have a Land Cost surcharge of 10-20%. For these departures we recommend making reservations 8 or more months in advance.

**ESTIMATED AIRFARE:** The Land Cost DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY FLIGHTS. Southwind's ticketing specialist can assist with all your air travel – providing an airfare quote to match your itinerary, personalized support for seating, monitoring schedule changes and coordinating directly with the airlines if any adjustments are needed. You'll also benefit from access to lower contract fares for some routes. Round-trip international air from US gateways (New York, Miami, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Washington-Dulles, Atlanta) is approximately \$450-\$700 per person. Airlines offering service arriving to Guatemala City International Airport (GUA) include American, United, Delta, Southwest and Avianca. The in-country flights (Guatemala City-Flores-Guatemala City) with TAG airlines are estimated at \$350 per person. You have the option to arrange your own flights or redeem award travel yourself if you prefer. Tickets should only be purchased after Southwind notifies you that your trip is confirmed. The airlines request that tickets match your passport name. Upon receipt of your deposit, Southwind provides flight booking details for your travel dates.

### SERVICES INCLUDED:

- Comprehensive **pre-departure planning packet** and expert travel advice.
- **In-country transfers** and ground transportation as noted in comfortable private vehicles with professional drivers.
- Local and return flight reconfirmation, **in-country airport check-in and luggage assistance**.
- **Accommodations in first-class (4 star) hotels** as listed (or at similar hotels) on a shared basis with private bath.
- Advanced bookings are recommended if you plan to customize the itinerary and arrive early or extend your stay. Double rooms (with king/queen bed) for couples and/or Triple/Quadruple rooms for families can be requested in advance, but cannot be guaranteed, as most hotels offer very few rooms with Triple/Quadruple beds. Also, very few connecting or adjacent rooms are available at most hotels.
- **Meals** indicated on the itinerary (B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner). **Vegetarian diets accommodated** on request (advance notification required). For other diets, consult your Southwind advisor before making a reservation. An **English-speaking guide/escort** leads the entire trip (Day 01-07). An assistant guide is provided for groups with 9 or more participants.
- Single Supplement provides single room accommodation in all hotels. Due to the limited number of rooms at the small hotels, there is a maximum of 2 singles allowed per group. If you require single accommodation, making reservations well in advance is recommended.

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### NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic nor international flights.
- Tours, meals (at about \$25-40 each per person) or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Early check-in or late check-out at hotels.
- Alcoholic beverages nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, equipment, laundry and phone calls.
- Tips to the local staff.
- Expenses incurred in trip preparation such as, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets, travel insurance, and additional expenses resulting from flight delays, schedule changes, cancellations, or missed connections.

### OPTIONAL HOTEL UPGRADES:

All hotels in the *Mayan Highlands & Tikal* are selected based on their outstanding adherence to international standards, attention to quality and detail, and their rich offering of amenities and comforts. However, upon request, we can upgrade your stay to the finest properties to be found in each location or the best Suites for 5-star luxury and VIP treatment.

**Antigua:** Upgrade to the lovely Posada del Angel Hotel or the historic Casa Santo Domingo Hotel.

**Lake Atitlán:** Upgrade to the luxurious Casa Palopo, or Villas Balam Ya.

**Guatemala City:** Upgrade to the Hotel Vista Real Guatemala.

**Petén/Flores:** Consider the La Lancha Village.

Due to high demand reservations are recommended at least 4 months in advance and upgrades are subject to availability.

**WEATHER:** Guatemala's weather is eternally comfortable—neither too hot nor too cold. Its seasons tend to be divided into a dry season and wet season, although the temperature (averages 72°F), varies more according to altitude than by the season. November through to April is the dry season and in the mountainous central region (Guatemala City, Antigua, Lake Atitlán, Chichicastenango, and the highlands) it is an ideal climate for outdoor pursuits with average temperatures of 64°F. It also coincides with the festivals of Easter week, Day of the Dead, the Burning of the Devil and the Saint Thomas festival in Chichicastenango. The rainy season runs from May to October which can hinder travel in more remote areas where roads are not well maintained, with Petén receiving the most amount of rainfall. The Petén region is hot throughout the year with an average temperature of 74°F, with rain possible year round. The busiest time of the year for tourism is between December and May when the dry season is in effect. Several festivals mean that much of the accommodation can be booked long in advance (especially in Antigua during Easter week). This is also a popular time for language learning and many North Americans come to study in the schools in towns such as Antigua & Xela.

**HOW TO SIGN UP:** Please complete Southwind's Trip Reservation eForm. There are fields for up to 6 travelers per form with the same address. The deposit is **\$1,500 per person**, [please click here to pay your deposit](#) by any major credit card through our secure CardConnect system. In the total amount due box, enter your deposit amount (without a comma) based on the number of travelers in your party. If you prefer, you can also call us at 1-800-377-9463 to make payment arrangements by phone or send a check. You will receive confirmation of your deposit.

Reservations can be accepted up to 60 days before departure, provided services and space are available. Due to the popularity of Guatemala, we recommend making reservations at least 4-5 months in advance for non-holiday or about 1 year prior for holiday departures. Once your trip is guaranteed to operate, you will receive comprehensive pre-departure planning documents by email.

**Land Balance:** Final payment is due at 120 days by Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, check, or electronic funds transfer. You can split your balance on two cards. You will receive a trip invoice indicating your balance due.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend purchasing coverage to protect your trip investment. Travel insurance is important in case of unexpected events prior to departure causing the need to cancel or change your dates. Weather, natural events, medical reason, quarantine, local strikes, personal injury/illness (for you, your traveling companion or family members at home), could require itinerary interruption or changes. Missed connections, delayed arrival, lost/delayed baggage or the need for medical attention or evacuation are also reasons why coverage is important. Southwind recommends **Travel Insured International** which offers coverage options at a good value. If you, your traveling companion or a family member has a pre-existing medical condition, you can still receive coverage if a recurrence of the condition forces you to cancel your trip, but you do need to purchase a plan **within 21 days of your**

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**deposit.** Southwind can provide eQuote for insurance to review upon receipt of your deposit and Trip Reservation eForm. [Learn more about coverage offered by Travel Insured International](#)

Specific policies will be outlined in your finalized custom trip proposal. General policies can be found under the current [Terms & Conditions](#) on Southwind's website.

**We look forward to having you travel with us in Guatemala!**

**Southwind Adventures, Inc**

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