

Guatemala: Maya Ruins & Volcano Trails

Trip style: Worldwide holidays

Destination: 📍 Guatemala

Trip code: GUA11-WHW10

Grades: 1, 2

Carbon Footprint: 🌳 3959kg CO2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Guatemala's got that special something for those seeking an unforgettable adventure. One of Central America's most captivating destinations, it's a land of rugged mountains, remote jungles, and remarkable ancient ruins left behind by the sophisticated civilisation that thrived here over 3,000 years ago – the Maya. Get to know the culture, cuisine, and traditions of modern Mayan communities in the highlands around Lake Atitlán and visit a trio of the most incredible archaeological sites in the Americas, including UNESCO-listed Tikal – the remains of a once mighty Mayan city buried deep within the jungle. We'll top it all with a tour of the World Heritage City of Antigua and a trek

across the striking lava fields below the smoking peak of Pacaya volcano.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Discovering the ancient Maya ruins of Tikal, Iximché and Yaxhá
- Visiting the authentic local market of Chichicastenango
- Trekking the trails around Pacaya – one of Guatemala's most active volcanoes
- A private boat trip across Lake Atitlán
- Preparing a traditional Guatemalan meal with an indigenous co-operative group
- Exploring the colourful streets of the former colonial capital, Antigua

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights including baggage and transfers
- Guided walks and sightseeing with local leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- 11 nights' accommodation
- 11 breakfasts, 3 lunches & 11 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- All in-destination transport and internal flights

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival into Guatemala

Arrive in Guatemala City and meet your local tour guide. Transfer to your hotel in Antigua and get to know the rest of the group including without-flight guests. Enjoy a welcome drink followed by dinner at the hotel.

Day 2: Antigua

We'll kick off our first full day in Guatemala with a guided tour of Antigua. As the nation's former capital, the whole city enjoys UNESCO World Heritage status and sits in the shadow of the Volcán de Agua – an extinct stratovolcano that dominates Guatemala's central highlands. Led by our local guide, we'll explore its rich history and architecture at landmarks like the Cathedral, La Merced Church, and San Francisco Monastery. In the afternoon, we'll get a taste of Guatemala's coffee culture with a visit to La Azotea Coffee Farm. Round off the day with dinner at a local restaurant, enjoying traditional Guatemalan cuisine.

Day 3: Pacaya Volcano & Cooking Class

Distance: 3.5 miles (5.5 km) Ascent/Descent: 1,350 ft (410m) Max Altitude: 7,550 ft (2,300m) This morning, we'll head to Pacaya Volcano for a walk across its otherworldly volcanic landscape of lava fields and geothermal hotspots. In the afternoon, we'll return to Antigua before visiting San Antonio Aguascalientes for a hands-on cooking class at a female-led co-operative. With generations of experience between them, the women of this unique organisation will help you prepare a traditional Guatemalan meal which you'll enjoy for dinner. Please note that this walk is classed as a challenging grade 3 level. Expect some steep ascents and descents and uneven volcanic terrain.

Day 4: Chichicastenango Market

Today begins with a visit to vibrant Chichicastenango market where tourists and locals rub shoulders shopping for day-to-day items and souvenir trinkets. We'll also stop by the Santo Tomás Church, a 15th century Roman Catholic chapel built on the ruins of a Mayan temple. Afterwards, we'll climb to the sacred Maya site of Pascual Abaj to experience a traditional Mayan ceremony. Enjoy a home-cooked lunch with a local family before travelling to the volcano-surrounded shores of Lake Atitlán for a relaxing evening and dinner.

Day 5: Lake Atitlán Sunrise Hike

Distance: 2 miles (3.1 km) Ascent: 450 ft (135m) Descent: 2,200 ft (675m) Max Altitude: 7,300 ft (2,215m) There are few better ways to start the day in Central America than with a spectacular sunrise. Set off on a sunrise hike up Mayan Face Mountain and at the summit, enjoy a packed breakfast served with some incredible views over Lake Atitlán. After descending the mountain, we'll explore the town of San Juan La Laguna and stop for lunch. It's then time for a boat ride across the lake to Panajachel where we'll round off with dinner in a local restaurant. Please note that this walk is classed as a challenging grade 3 level. Expect some steep ascents and descents and uneven volcanic terrain.

Day 6: Iximché Archaeological Site

Enjoy a leisurely morning at Lake Atitlán before visiting the ancient Maya capital of Iximché. Explore the fascinating ruins before continuing to Guatemala City for the next leg of our adventure.

Day 7: Quetzal Nature Reserve

Distance: 1 to 2 miles (1.8 to 3.6 km) Ascent: up to 820 ft (250m) Max Altitude: 6,200 ft (1,900m) We'll travel to Cobán today but not before a stop at the Biotopo del Quetzal Nature Reserve for a choice of short, scenic trails. Trek through lush cloud forests searching for the elusive quetzal bird - Guatemala's national animal - followed by a visit to an orchid farm. We'll end the day with dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 8: Semuc Champey National Park

Distance: 0.6 miles (1 km) Ascent: 430 ft (130m) Max Altitude: 1,300 ft (400m) Today we drive by bus from Coban to Lanquin (approx. 2hrs), then we take 4 x 4s to Semuc Champey National Park along an unpaved/dirt road that is bumpy in some parts. (approx. 20-30mins) The Semuc Champey National Park is a natural wonder known for its series of turquoise limestone pools. Spend your time here swimming in the crystal-clear waters, relaxing by the river, or walking up to the mirador for panoramic views over lagoons and lush jungle. We'll return to Cobán in the afternoon.

Day 9: Candelaria Caves

Explore the vast limestone caverns of Candelaria Caves, one of Central America's largest cave systems. Stretching over 13.5 miles (22 km), it's a vast and intricate network of limestone caverns and underground rivers that's both a geological marvel and sacred site for the indigenous Maya people. We'll then drive to Flores, a charming island town on Lake Petén Itzá where we'll spend the next two nights.

Day 10: Yaxhá Archaeological Site

This morning, we will visit the Yaxhá Archaeological site a sprawling ancient Maya city deep in the rainforest. With its impressive scale and well-preserved structures, Yaxhá offers a glimpse into the incredible sophistication of Mayan architecture and culture. At its peak in the 8th century, the city housed 20,000 people and featured over 400 structures, including five acropolises, two observatories, and three ball courts. One of the temples we will visit is the Temple of the Red Hands. This 30-meter-high structure is notable for having red handprints on its walls, which are believed to be a form of Mayan graffiti. After our exploration of this magnificent site, we will head to Flores for a lunch break and a walking tour of what is known as the gateway to the Petén, Guatemala's vast northern rainforest region. It is a charming small town full of colourful buildings and narrow cobble streets. Finish the day exploring the tropical gardens of our hotel before dinner.

Day 11: Tikal National Park

Distance: 4 miles (7 km) Ascent/Descent: 360 ft (110m) Max Altitude: 1,150 ft (350m) Today, we'll explore the awe-inspiring ruins of Tikal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Buried deep within the jungle, it was one of the most powerful of all the Mayan city states and dominated the region for around 700 years. The most striking feature of Tikal is its towering, steep-sided temples, rising to heights of more than 44m, the most famous being the Temple of the Great

Jaguar. We'll take a guided tour through its grand structures and learn the stories, myths, and legends behind this incredible feat of ancient architecture. After lunch in Tikal, we'll fly back to Guatemala City and spend the night in Antigua, enjoying a farewell dinner.

Day 12: Departure Day

Spend your final morning in Antigua at leisure before our with-flights guests transfer to Guatemala City airport for their overnight flight back to the UK.

Day 13: Arrive in the UK

Arrive back in the UK.

Meson de María, Antigua

Mesón de María is a charming boutique hotel set in a beautifully restored colonial building. With traditional Spanish architecture, a picturesque courtyard, and rustic decor, it blends modern comforts with timeless elegance. Its central location makes it the perfect base for exploring Antigua's historic streets.

Regis Hotel & Spa, Panajachel

Regis Hotel & Spa is a peaceful retreat in downtown Panajachel, just 500m from Lake Atitlán. Surrounded by lush gardens, this traditional hacienda hotel offers natural thermal baths and rejuvenating spa treatments. Rooms are kitted out in rustic Spanish-style, offering a cool and comfortable place to unwind at the end of the day.

Best Western Plus Hotel Stofella, Guatemala City

Located in Guatemala City's vibrant Zona Viva district, the Best Western Plus Hotel Stofella puts you in easy reach of restaurants, shopping, and sightseeing options. Décor combines classic European style and modern amenities, and each air-conditioned room features free Wi-Fi, a TV, and a safe. The hotel's Trattoria Veneziana Restaurant offers Mediterranean and international cuisine, while tasty snacks are served at Cafe Venezia.

Park Hotel, Cobán

Surrounded by the lush greenery of Alta Verapaz, the Park Hotel is ideal for those seeking to experience the tranquility of Cobán. The hotel features an outdoor pool, a restaurant serving local and international cuisine, and offers various outdoor activities that allow guests to explore the stunning landscapes of the region. Rooms are simple but comfortable and come with all mod cons.

Hotel Villa Maya, Flores

Set in the Petén jungle near Flores, Hotel Villa Maya is a tranquil eco-hotel surrounded by tropical gardens and private lagoons. Where rustic charm meets modern comforts, the hotel offers wildlife observation, two outdoor pools, and a restaurant. Its serene setting makes it the perfect retreat after exploring the nearby Maya ruins of Tikal.

Hotel Villa Colonial, Antigua (November 2025 only)

Set on a charming cobblestone street just 10 minutes from Central Park, the Hotel Villa Colonial is surrounded by coffee plantations and dramatic views of no less than three

volcanoes. Rooms come in traditional Spanish style and hotel facilities include a heated outdoor pool, tropical gardens, an on-site restaurant, and complimentary Wi-Fi in public areas.