

**BELIZE - GUATEMALA HIGHLANDS AND MARKETS**



**TRIP CODE**

GUTSHM

**DURATION**

9 Days

**LOCATIONS**

Guatemala



**INTRODUCTION**

The Guatemala highlands, without a doubt, contain some of Central America's most arresting scenery. Volcanoes, green mountains and valleys, wildflowers, rivers and lakes make up the Guatemala highlands landscape. Numerous Mayan villages dot the mountainous heartland, the colorful indigenous costumes of their people adding to the impossible beauty of the region. Whilst the markets of Guatemala offer an incredible wealth of souvenirs and authentic handicrafts, but they also provide a spectacular setting for photography – the colourful stalls, where vegetables, fruit, and vibrant fabrics melt into a rainbow-like symphony, are a sight to behold. Although markets abound across Guatemala, we invite you to this 9 days itinerary including our favorite sights.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1: Arrival in Antigua**

Arrival in Antigua and transfer to your hotel. Founded in the sixteenth century, Antigua is a cosmopolitan destination with a rich colonial past. Its cobblestone streets are lined with pretty, pastel-hued homes, luxe boutique hotels, and an exceptional selection of smart restaurants and shops. A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979, this city of 35,000 people sits in valley between coffee farms, indigenous villages, and three imposing volcanoes. At the heart of town is the parque central, a European-style plaza busy with shoe-shiners, ice cream vendors, families, and tourists. During its architectural peak, Antigua was home to dozens of colonial monuments, churches, and monasteries, but an earthquake in 1773 damaged or reduced most to rubble. In the centuries thereafter, efforts were made to rebuild and restore, and the city today is filled with melancholy but gorgeous relics and ruins.



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### DAY 2: Antigua Villages Tour

Today, we'll visit the local villages that surround Antigua to learn about local culture and history. We'll start by driving up to the mountain town of Santa Maria, where many women still wear the traditional Mayan dress. We'll then venture down into the towns of San Pedro and Ciudad Vieja to visit colonial sights and see local village living before reaching the town of San Antonio, where we'll visit a women's textile cooperative and see how the beautiful and intricate Guatemalan textiles are made. Along the way we'll stop at a Macadamia nut farm, where we'll have a chance to try a variety of products produced from the nuts. This tour is flexible and guests should feel free to let their guide know if there are specific places they would like to visit.



### DAY 2: Street Food Tour

Today, your guide will take you on a tour of Antigua's street food hot spots, where you'll get to taste some of Guatemala's most authentic cuisine. These are the places where long lines of locals are a fixture and for good reason: The food served is delicious and well-prepared. Items you might try include chuchitos (the Guatemalan take on a tamale), pupusas (cheese-filled corn tortillas), rellenitas (plantain dough that's filled with beans and then fried), and even pigs' feet. You'll learn the cultural and historic significance of the eats on offer and will also visit Antigua's bustling market to explore the colorful array of ingredients used in Guatemalan cuisine. (Please note that this tour is for more adventurous eaters.)



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### DAY 3: Fairly Traded Coffee & Iron Artisan Workshop

De La Gente (DLG) is a charity working to support small independent coffee producers and promoting environmentally responsible agriculture in Guatemala. This tour takes guests to visit some of the families supported by this organization where they can work side-by-side with small coffee farmers in their daily coffee processing, pick, pulp, ferment, wash, dry, trilla, sort, and grade the coffee (depending on the season), roast coffee over an open fire and grind by hand on a grindstone before sampling their handiwork. Coffee Season is Nov to Mar. After the coffee tour guests have a simple, traditional meal in a local home before transferring to the village of San Juan El Obispo to meet ironwork expert Carlos. Carlos hosts visitors in his workshop, teaching the art of turning steel into a garden decoration or wall hanging in the form of critters, leaves, owls, and the like. At the end of the trip, you'll have a one-of-a-kind piece of art. Carlos will tell the story of his family of metalworkers and how he turned this skill into an art form. He'll demonstrate the skills of his trade and teach you how to make your own iguana, butterfly or candle-holder.



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### DAY 4: Comalapa Market, Iximche & Transfer to Atitlan

Guests will be met at their hotel by their private guide & driver for their 1hr transfer to the town of Comalapa. On arrival to the town guests can see the famous painted mural that the school children of the town painted depicting mayor events in Guatemala's history up to the signing of the peace accords in 1996. From here you will visit some local painters who continue the tradition of naïve paintings that the town is so famous for. Finally guests can visit the wonderful authentic market of Comalapa to see the local people go about their daily life buying produce and goods for the rest of the week still dressed in the traditional textiles of the area. Guests can also visit the small museum dedicated to the composer who wrote Guatemala's national anthem who came from Comalapa. Guests will enjoy a local lunch before heading off to explore the Mayan ruins of Iximiche. After exploring the site clients will transfer to Lake Atitlan and their hotel.



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### DAY 5: San Juan & Santiago Full Day Tour

Guests are picked up from their hotel & transfer to San Juan La Laguna Village where they visit a local textile cooperative to see the back strap loom in use and to see how they still dye with natural dyes. Guests also visit the home and workshop of local naïf painters before boarding the boat onto Santiago Village for lunch. After lunch guests will walk with their guide to find the house where the Maya God Maximon is living. Each year a different "brotherhood" has the privilege of taking care of their God so his location changes. Once with Maximon you may see local shaman performing rituals for local people. After visiting Maximon guests can visit the local church and learn about the history of this very traditional town and also see the market and learn about the distinctive textiles and primitive art that is famous from this area. When guests are ready they will be transferred back to their hotel.



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### DAY 6: Chichi Tour & Transfer to Xela

Guests are met at their hotel by their private driver & guide for the 1hr transfer out to the highland town of Chichicastenango. Along the way guests will pass through the central highland region and see the local Maya people in their traditional dress going about their daily lives - working in the fields, collecting firewood, travelling between markets, selling their wares. Upon arrival at Chichicastenango your guide will take you to explore this famous market both the local areas of the fruit & vegetables & everyday items as well as the craft area where you can find endless variety of beautiful textile, wooden & ceramic crafts. Guests can also visit the famous St Tomas Church where local Maya people come to perform Maya rituals within the Catholic church - demonstrating the interesting way the two faiths have combined in recent times. If guests want to they can also hike up the hill to the Pascual Abaj ritual site to see if any local shaman are performing rituals and/or to the cemetery on the outskirts of town. Lunch is provided. When guests are ready they will be driven to Quetzaltenango (Xela).



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### DAY 7: Almolonga & San Francisco Market

Guests are picked up from their hotel by their driver and guide for a day of exploring the local highlands market towns of Almolonga and San Andres Xecul. Almolonga is K'iche' for 'the place where water springs' and is known as "the garden of Central America" for the fine vegetables it produces, much of which is exported to El Salvador. The market here is a wonderfully colorful vegetable market and offers a great opportunity to see local people in their traditional clothing. San Francisco El Alto is another very traditional town nestled in the highlands. On Fridays the town hosts the largest, most authentic market in Guatemala with separate sections for animals, textiles, etc. The animal market here is particularly well known.



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### DAY 8: Totonicapán Cultural Program & Transfer to Antigua

Today, you'll travel from Quetzaltenango to the town of Totonicapán, located deep in the beautiful Maya highlands. Here, a local guide will help you discover a variety of the handicrafts for which this region is so well known. Stops along the way may include a visit with Don Miguel Hernandez, who uses giant wood looms to make lovely, colorful textiles, or to a ceramics workshop where clay plates are handcrafted on pottery wheels and crushed glass is used to make lead-free paint. You may also visit a local family who produces boxes for traditional sweets sold in markets. Lunch takes place in a local house and is accompanied by a marimba and folkloric dance performance. In the afternoon return to Antigua.



### DAY 9: Departure

After the breakfast, you will be picked-up at your hotel in Antigua and transferred to the Guatemala City airport.



## INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

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<b>Accommodation</b>	Deluxe
<b>Inclusions</b>	<p>Accommodation with breakfast Other meals where indicated Tours and activities as mentioned Transport as mentioned, in minibus Domestic flights as mentioned Local taxes</p> <p><b>Exclusions</b> Visa fees (if applicable) Personal expenses Optional activities not mentioned in itinerary Gratuities for staff/guides</p>
<b>Difficulty Rating</b>	1 (easy)
<b>Single Surcharge</b>	Available upon request
<b>Notes</b>	Contact us for more details
<b>Price Dependent upon</b>	Season and availability

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## SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu's "Pass it on" programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.
- 4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise your impact on both local environments and communities.
- 5) Chimu Adventures' offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure's internal processes are also structured to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.