

CENTRAL AMERICA MULTI COUNTRY - MEXICO & GUATEMALA TRAIL



INTRODUCTION

The border area between Mexico and Guatemala was once the centre of the Mayan empire. This amazing journey provides an insight into both countries Mayan heritage and how this heritage has shaped the two countries differently - from food, to culture and identity.

Starting in Mexico City, we visit the Pyramids of Teotihuacan. We then travel to the richly indigenous area of San Cristobal (where many people still practice Mayan beliefs) and we travel to the majestic Mayan Ruins of Palenque. In Guatemala we visit the grand Mayan ruins of Tikal and the colonial city of Antigua, which in colonial times was essentially the capital of Central America. We also visit one of the world's most beautiful lakes, Lake Atitlan and visit one of the Latin America's best (and not so touristy) markets at Chichicastenago!

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrival transfer in Mexico city

On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details of our representative office.



TRIP CODE

LATSMGT

DEPARTURE

Daily

DURATION

15 Days

LOCATIONS

Mexico City, Villahermosa, Palenque, San Cristobal, Chichicastenago, Guatemala City



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DAY 1: Mexico City

Mexico City lies in the heart of Central Mexico and is the capital of Mexico and the oldest capital city in the Americas. It is one of the largest cities in the world with over 20 million inhabitants (in the greater metropolitan area) and has a rich history and colourful culture.



DAY 2: Mexico City – Half Day City Tour

This morning we will explore the magnificent Mexico City, built on top of the ruins of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. You will be collected from your hotel at 8.40am approximately. *Operates only from Sunday to Friday. The tour begins at 9.15am and our first stop is the Zocalo (main square), one of the biggest public squares in the world. We will visit the Catedral Metropolitana – the biggest church in Latin America, and the Palacio Nacional – which hosts Diego Rivera’s murals depicting the history of Mexico. We then drive along the famous boulevard Paseo de la Reforma, built during the short-lived reign of Emperor Maximilian to connect the main square and his castle in Chapultepec.



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DAY 3: Teotihuacan Pyramids and Guadalupe Shrine

This morning you will be collected from your hotel to visit the impressive archaeological site of Teotihuacan, located 50km northeast of Mexico City. On the way, stop at the "Plaza de las Tres Culturas", where three cultures converge: Aztec, Spanish, and contemporary Mexican. Continue to the Shrine de Guadalupe, Latin America's most revered religious shrine. It is here where the Virgin of Guadalupe is said to have appeared before an Indian named Juan Diego in 1531, and an image of her was miraculously emblazoned on his cloak. There is time to explore the New Basilica de Guadalupe (the Old Basilica, built in 1700, is slowly sinking) and to see Juan Diego's cloak. Drive for another hour to Teotihuacan, one of the most impressive cities of the ancient world, held sacred by the Aztecs. Explore its temples, palaces and pyramids, including the Quetzalpapalotl Palace, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the immense Pyramid of the Sun, ranked among the biggest in the world. Shrine of Guadalupe not available to visit on December 11th and 12th. On completion of your tour, return to Mexico City and you will be taken to your hotel. Please note this is a small group tour.



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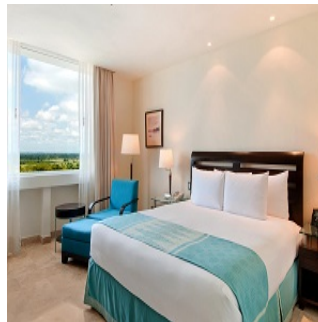
LOCATIONS

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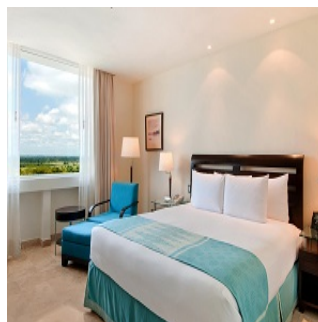
DAY 4: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.



DAY 4: Arrival transfer in Villahermosa

On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details of our representative office.



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DAY 4: Villahermosa

The sprawling city of Villahermosa, the capital and largest city in the state of Tabasco, is situated on the banks of the Rio Grijalva. It has developed into a modern city and is an important centre for the Mexican oil industry. The city's main sights include La Venta Museum-Park, Cathedral of the Lord of Tabasco, Zona Luz (City Centre) and the historic centre of the city including the Plaza de Armas and the Casa de los Azulejos.



DAY 5: Villahermosa to Palenque

Today, you will visit one of the most beautiful and emblematic landmarks of the classical Mayan culture - the ruins of the city of Palenque. The city's highlights include the Temple of the Inscriptions, where an important burial chamber was discovered in the 1950s, and the imposing architectural complex of El Palacio, one of the most beautiful constructions to be found in the entire environment of Maya culture. Following the visit, you will be transferred to your hotel in the town of Palenque.



DAY 6: Palenque to San Cristobal via Agua Azul

After breakfast, we will drive to Agua Azul, a place where over 500 cascades create incredible turquoise colored "pools" surrounded by the rainforest. After that, we will continue to San Cristobal de las Casas, drop off at your hotel.



DAY 6: San Cristobal de las Casas

The Spanish colonial city of San Cristobal de las Casas is one of Mexico's most enamoured and photographed historic centres. It has often been likened to Antigua City in Guatemala or even Cusco in Peru, but there is no doubt that San Cristobal has a flavour of its own. While the centre does have a distinct stately Spanish feel, the indigenous influence is arguably stronger. Chiapas is home to several indigenous groups descended from the Maya, two of the largest being the Tzotzils and Tzeltals.



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DAY 7: San Cristobal - Half Day City Tour

We will explore the colonial city centre of San Cristobal de las Casas on foot. We will visit the cathedral on the north side of the pretty main square, with its lavish interior and gold-encrusted pulpit. We then walk a few blocks to the impressive 16th-century Dominican church, Templo de Santo Domingo, with its intricate pink facade and gilded Baroque interior. There will be time to browse the handicraft market in front of the church, where Tzotzil Indians from the surrounding hills come to trade. We then drive 10km into the Chiapas highlands, to the Tzotzil Indian villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan. The Tzotzils are descended from the ancient Maya and maintain some unique customs, costumes and beliefs. We will visit the beautiful white church in San Juan Chamula. The candles, incense and chanting worshippers make a powerful impression. We then drive to the nearby village of Zinacantan, with its picturesque church and handicraft market. After the tour we return to San Cristobal where you will be dropped off at your hotel. Approximate duration: 5 hours.



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DAY 8: San Cristobal de las Casas - La Mesilla Border

Transfer from San Cristobal de las Casas to La Mesilla Border (Guatemala).



DAY 8: Transfer La Mesilla - Quetzaltenango

On arrival at the La Mesilla Border you will meet your Guatemalan driver and transfer to another vehicle. Transfer from La Mesilla Border to Quetzaltenango.



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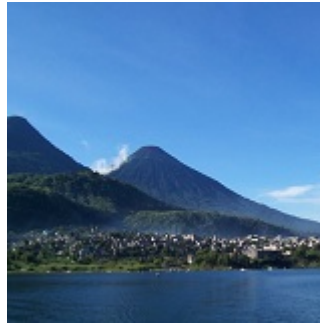
DAY 9: Transfer Quetzaltenango - Lake Atitlan

Transfer from Quetzaltenango to Lake Atitlan.



DAY 10: San Juan & Santiago Full Day Lake Tour

Today you will be transferred to San Juan La Laguna Village where you can visit a local textile cooperative to see how the use of natural dyes and materials works locally. You will also visit the home and workshop of local Naif painters before boarding a boat to take you to Santiago Village for lunch. After lunch you will visit the home of the Maya God, Maximon. His home changes every year as he is looked after by a different 'brotherhood'. You can also witness a Shaman perform rituals on locals (on selected days), if you wish you can hire their services for a personal ceremony. A trip to a local church and market is also included.



DAY 11: Chichicastenango Market & Flores

Guests are met at their hotel by their bilingual host driver 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. On 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 textiles, 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 and when guests are ready they will be transferred onto Guatemala City Airport for their outward flight.



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DAY 11: Arrival transfer in Flores

Arrival at Mundo Maya airport and transfer to your Flores hotel by private vehicle.



DAY 12: Tikal Full Day Tour with Lunch

Guests are met at their hotel by a private guide for a tour of Tikal National Park, where some 3,000 ancient structures rise from the rainforest floor. Guests will follow in the footsteps of Maya royalty and commoners as our guide leads them to such sites as the majestic Great Plaza and its Temple of the Jaguar. Temple of the Masks, the Acropolis and much more. Lunch is provided at a local restaurant. Guests can also explore the museum at the visitor centre before returning to their hotel. Included : Private archaeology guide, private transfers, park admission fee, lunch. (Please note: There is no vehicle transfer for guests staying in Tikal Park.)



DAY 13: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.



DAY 13: Arrival transfer in Antigua

Arrive in Guatemala City airport and transfer to Antigua by private vehicle. Free afternoon to explore this romantic town on your own.



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DAY 14: Antigua Walking City Tour

You will be met at your hotel reception by your private guide to begin your half day walking tour of Antigua. Your tour will cover the cultural, historical & social highlights of this colonial city with a behind-the-scenes look at some of the many ruined churches, convents, and cathedrals. Entrances are included to the Iglesia San Francisco, the Cathedral and La Merced Church. This tour is flexible and if you have specific sites that you wish to see please notify your guide. If you wish to visit other monuments you will need to pay the entrances directly.



DAY 15: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

Private transfer from Antigua to Guatemala City airport for your departure flight.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Budget
Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided tours and excursions Accommodation Ground transfers Transport Internal Flights Breakfasts Other meals where specified
Difficulty Rating	1 (easy)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request
Notes	Breakfasts are not included for the hotels in Mexico
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability

SUSTAINABILITY

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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.

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