JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

ACTIVE GUATEMALA: TREKKING IN STYLE

10 days from **£2,625pp**

GUATEMALA / ANTIGUA AND THE HIGHLANDS / LAKE ATITLAN AND VILLAGES



WITH OVER 40 YEARS EXPERIENCE, NO-ONE KNOWS LATIN AMERICA LIKE WE DO

EXPERIENCE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

WHY US

We are the UK's No.1 specialist in travel to Latin America and have been creating award-winning holidays to every corner of the region for over four decades; we pride ourselves on being the most knowledgeable people there are when it comes to travel to Central and South America and passionate about it too.

OUR JOURNEY

As our name suggests, we are single-minded about Latin America. This is what sets us apart from other travel companies – and what allows us to offer you not just a holiday but the opportunity to experience something extraordinary on inspiring journeys throughout Mexico, Central and South America.

WE LOVE LATIN AMERICA

- A passion for the region runs through all we do
- All our Consultants have lived or travelled extensively in Latin America
- Up-to-the-minute knowledge underpinned by 40 years' experience

TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE

- Fully bonded and licensed
- ATOL-protected
- On your side when it matters
- Book with confidence, knowing every penny is secure

THE REAL LATIN AMERICA

- Our insider knowledge helps you go beyond the guidebooks
- We hand-pick hotels with character and the most rewarding excursions
- Let us show you the Latin America we know and love

OVERVIEW & OUTLINE ITINERARY

An exhilarating trek through some of Guatemala's most exquisite volcanic scenery with comfortable glamping.

DAY 1	**Arrive in Guatemala City and transfer to colonial Antigua.**
DAY 2	**Guided walking discovery of Antigua.**
DAY 3	**Optional hike up Pacaya volcano.**
DAY 4	**Transfer to the trailhead of the walk to your first camp site.**
DAY 5	**Trek through mountain peaks and valleys.**
DAY 6	**Visit Mayan villages.**
DAY 7	**Trek through coffee farms to Lake Atitlán.**
DAY 8	**Optional visit to San Juan de la Laguna.**
DAY 9	**Return by road to Antigua.**
DAY 10	**Transfer to the airport for your international flight.**

ITINERARY

This is an invigorating guided trek in remote highland Guatemala, where you will ascend lofty mountains and descend to sultry valleys, all in just a few days. Every detail has been carefully thought out to balance challenging trekking with style and comfort: it's definitely more than a relaxing stroll but you benefit from fantastic facilities and service. You'll rest every night in a spacious safari-style tent with comfy mattress, while the overland support truck is equipped with a hot shower and toilet. You'll savour superior cuisine served in three full meals a day, and you are accompanied by attentive and knowledgeable guides. You can relax and enjoy your walk, each day you'll travel light with your day pack while the camp and your gear is moved from one camp site to the next.

Along the way you'll walk through cloud forest canopy and coffee fincas. As a backdrop to all this is the rich culture, a blend of Mayan and Spanish colonial; pre-Columbian religion and ritual blended with Christianity – see it in the markets at Antigua and the pocket-sized rural communities on the fringe of Lake Atitlán.

DAY 1

Arrive in Guatemala City and transfer to colonial Antigua.



The city is a colonial work of art, with cobbled streets, overhanging tiled roofs and a beautiful, leafy central plaza. There's an abundance of huge ruined churches, convents and monasteries, testament to a time when Antigua was the country's capital and its main religious centre. It seems that every doorway opens onto a fragrant tiled courtyard. A dramatic backdrop of smouldering volcanoes and ruined churches and convents surrounded by parkland bear witness to the city's destruction a volcanic eruption in 1773.

DAY 2

Guided walking discovery of Antigua.



You'll have plenty of time to absorb this fascinating city, including on a walking tour of the historic centre, accompanied by a resident of the city.Take a two hour stroll round Antigua accompanied by an English-speaking inhabitant of the city. This experience offers a unique insight into local life and opens doors which are usually closed to visitors, from the scents and flavours of the Guatemalan kitchen to your guide's favourite haunts. Take a look beyond the façades of the lovingly restored buildings to see what a day in this graceful town really feels like. Your companion offers a programme that can vary depending on your own interests, but usually comprises a visit to a market, an introduction to street food and a home visit to someone involved with the Semana Santa (Easter) organisation.

DAY 3

Optional hike up Pacaya volcano.

Fancy the idea of climbing a volcano, and being rewarded with magnificent countryside views punctuated by the conical forms of sister volcanoes, there's an optional guided hike up Pacaya, 2,552m high, a climb which only takes about 90 minutes. The climb is not technically demanding, but the pine forests on the lower slopes give way to scree and ash underfoot so you will need to be in reasonably good physical condition. The sulphurous vapour emitted from the cone is sometimes accompanied by small flows of lava: indeed there was an eruption in 2014, but it is still safe to climb. On a clear day it is possible to see all the way to El Salvador.



DAY 4

Transfer to the trailhead of the walk to your first camp site.

You will be collected in Antigua and driven to San Andrés Itzapa, famed for being the home of the Mayan deity known as San Simón, or Moximón. But this is no saintly fellow: frequently his effigy is dressed in a dapper suit and he is more than inclined to enjoying a quiet cigarette, and is recognised as a womaniser and all-round rogue. In the various communities where he is venerated, he is carried from one resident's house to another and you will be able to visit him and watch local people paying their respects.



From there it's another short drive to the first camp site, ascending through kitchen gardens, orchards and plantations of snow peas, coffee and avocado trees on near vertical inclines. Hike past smallholdings before entering lush cloud-forest, from where you descend to arrive at a scenic grassy saddle between two mountain peaks. Today's hike is only 11km long but you ascend to 2,650m above sea level, and may be a little breathless.

DAY 5

Trek through mountain peaks and valleys.



Today you start the more challenging part of the trek, and will cover a distance of almost 15km Climb up into a protected area of pristine landscapes before descending through forest and pocket-sized fields into the La Vega river valley, over 915m below. Ascend through coffee farms to your lunch spot, and after your deserved break you cross a rustic hanging bridge over the river canyon and follow your upward trail fringed by trees smothered in bromeliads and sheltering orchids before you arrive at the second camp, where you will be welcomed with a drink before settling down round the camp fire to enjoy the views – you may even see plumes of smoke and molten lava lightening up the sky.

DAY 6

Visit Mayan villages.



Today you'll witness some of the finest natural scenery that Guatemala has to offer. A morning push takes you to the highest point of the trek, just over 2,745 m. You follow a ridge with panoramic views of six volcanoes and cloud forest which reveals unique plants enlivened by abundant bird-life. Along the way, you'll be able to talk with local farmers as they work in their terraced fields and learn about traditional agricultural practices. A long, gradual descent leads you to your trail lunch location (and a short siesta) before you end the day at your campsite, which has views of Lake Atitlán in the distance below.

Later, venture into the Mayan community of Chuinimachicaj to visit a women's cooperative which specialises in traditional back-strap weaving, an art practiced for centuries in Guatemala and still employed to weave fabric for clothing and other household textiles.

DAY 7

Trek through coffee farms to Lake Atitlán.



The final day of the trek begins with a 820 m descent into the La Madre Vieja river valley which weaves through a patchwork of traditional agricultural fields and small villages. Visit a picturesque coffee finca to learn about the planting, harvesting and processing of small-batch specialty coffee, and avail yourself of the opportunity to savour the end product.

Cross the river by another hanging footbridge before a short ascent which takes you up to the rim of ethereal Lake Atitlán with extensive views of the clear waters below and the three massive volcanoes which surround it.

From there, a final descent through terraced fields bursting with flowers and vegetables takes you to the lakeside village of San Antonio Palopó to conclude the trek. San Antonio Palopó, about 10km from Panajachel, lies in a natural amphitheatre formed by the mountains behind it. The village is composed of narrow streets of adobe houses with roofs of thatch or corrugated iron and there's a fine 16th century church. The village inhabitants are known for their colourful costumes and headdresses.

DAY 8

Optional visit to San Juan de la Laguna.



Lake Atitlan appears before you on the last day of the trek where you'll be able to put your feet up and enjoy what must be one of the world's most incredible views. The lake is peppered with small villages. We suggest a visit to see one of the local communities or if you've not had enough adventure kayaking and stand up paddle boarding can be arranged locally.

Alternatively we can arrange an optional excursion across the lake. A private boat will transport you across the full length of the lake from Panajachel to the village of San Juan La Laguna on its western edge. Here you will have a unique opportunity to interact with the local indigenous people and gain first-hand insight into and understanding of the Maya Tzutujil way of life. You will visit a number of artisans and workshops that still use traditional methods, including natural dyes to colour their vibrant textiles.

DAY 9

Return by road to Antigua.

Once back in Antigua, you have the rest of the day at leisure.



DAY 10

Transfer to the airport for your international flight.

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Walking tour of Antigua with a local guide
- Exhilarating hikes through exquisite volcanic scenery and cloud-forest
- Venture into the Mayan communities
- Visit to a coffee finca

ESSENTIALS

2 scenic road journeys (3-4 hours each).

On this tour we use good hotels with character, they are medium sized, colonial style,, friendly establishments, with well-equipped rooms, private bathroom and heating. Key camping equipment for the trek – good quality safari style glamping tents and cooking equipment, toilet tent with HOT WATER! , mess tent . deck chairs and good quality mattress with thermal under blanket to prevent damp are provided; you can bring your own walking poles or they will be provided . Snacks and pre-arranged alcohol are also provided.

Breakfast daily, full board days 4-7 . Picnic style lunches during the trek days 4-7

We carefully select our local partners, some of whom we have worked with for over 30 years. Their English-speaking guides understand the expectations of our clients very well, and are consistently singled out for praise by clients on their return.

10 days, 9 nights: Antigua 3; Camping 3; Lake Atitlan 2 ; Antigua 1.

- Biking or hiking close to Antigua..
- Hike up Pacaya volcano.
- Biking and kayaking, lake Atitlán.
- Visit to San Juan de la Laguna.

The unit of currency in Guatemala is the quetzal.

Cash machines are available in all major cities and towns, and so taking a debit or credit card with a PIN number is the most convenient way of withdrawing money while on your trip, and in most shops and restaurants you can also pay by card. However, since cards can get lost, damaged, withheld or blocked, you should not rely exclusively on a card to access funds.

We recommend that additionally you take a reasonable quantity of US dollars cash (no more than is covered by your insurance), which you can exchange into local currency Dollar bills should be in good condition, soiled or torn bills may be refused. You can take sterling, but the exchange rate is not always competitive or even available, restricting the number of places where you can change money.

It is very difficult to give a guideline for essential expenses but a budget of around US$35 per day should cover the cost of meals not included in the holiday itinerary, drinks and the odd souvenir. Eat at the best restaurants and you will pay considerably more.

Tips are expected and local guides often rely on their tip as a significant proportion of their income.

Most service industry workers will expect a tip of some kind and so it is useful to have spare change for hotel porters, taxi drivers and the like. It is common to leave 10 – 12% in restaurants.
Tipping guidelines can be found in our Briefing Dossier.

Travel insurance is essential.

Details of our recommended policy can be found on our Travel Insurance page.

If you have purchased your flights through Journey Latin America, the international departure tax is usually included in the ticket.

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This holiday is suitable for all able-bodied, fit visitors with hiking or hill-walking experience. The trek does not go over 3,000m at any point but it is undulating with long stretches of steep assent and dissent . You should be able to walk several hours up or down steep dirt track with natural obstacles (such as tree roots etc).

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports must be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Anyone with a different nationality should enquire with us or check with the relevant consulate.

If flying to the US, or via the US you will need to fill in your online ESTA application.

In March and April visitors will encounter high temperatures (up to 30°C) in the lowlands, but cool evenings in the Guatemalan highlands, with temperatures falling to around 5°C. Rainfall and humidity will be relatively low at this time.

Bring plenty of light cotton clothing and good, comfortable walking shoes with ankle support or preferably boots . Some warm items as the evenings get very cold and good waterproof jackets are also necessary. We suggest that you plan to 'layer' your clothing; it is easier and more efficient to put on a couple of light layers than one thick jumper, and sensible to have long sleeves for areas where mosquitoes.

Protection against the sun (sun-block, sun hat) and mosquito repellant and shades are essential. A day-pack is useful for carrying sun block, guidebook, water and any extra layers and snacks

We recommend 2 litres of water a day that you will need to carry either in bottles or a camel-back style water bladder.

Please get in touch with the office before departure if you have any doubts.

Preventative vaccinations are recommended against the following: typhoid; polio; tetanus; hepatitis A. You should consult your GP for specific requirements, including advice on yellow fever and malaria tablets (unlikely for this holiday). For specific requirements you must consult your GP.

You can also find helpful information on the Masta Travel Health website.

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GET IN TOUCH WITH US...

Our friendly, knowledgeable team of travel experts are always happy to chat about holiday ideas and share helpful advice. Give us a call today and begin planning your perfect trip to Latin America.

0208 747 8315

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 9am – 6pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

SEND US AN EMAIL

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