JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



PRIVATE JOURNEYS WITH JOURNEY LATIN

SIGNATURE GUATEMALA: MOUNTAINS, MARKETS AND MAYAN RUINS

12 days from **£3,200pp**

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

Explore Guatemala's past and present Mayan identity in our 12-day holiday visiting Lake Atitlan, the Mayan highland towns and ancient Tikal.

DAY 1	**Arrive Guatemala City and transfer to your hotel.**
DAY 2	**Fly to Flores, boat trip on Lake Petén Itzá**
DAY 3	**Visit the great Mayan city of Tikal and stay for sunset**
DAY 4	**Fly to Guatemala City and transfer to Antigua, the elegant historic capital**
DAY 5	**Explore Antigua with your guide**
DAY 6	**Transfer across the Mayan highlands to Quetzaltenango**
DAY 7	**Visit the Friday market at San Francisco El Alto**
DAY 9	**Journey across the highlands to Lake Atitlán.**
DAY 10	**Optional visit to Chichicastenango, Mayan town and market**
DAY 11	**Guided day trip to lakeside villages.**
DAY 12	**Transfer to Antigua for a final night**
DAY 13	**Transfer to the airport in Guatemala City for your international flight.**

ITINERARY

Guatemala, with its strong Mayan identity, brims with culture and tradition. Observing day-to-day life in this exotic and colourful Central American country is a fascinating experience, whether exploring its more famous highlights or going a little off the beaten track. Our Signature Guatemala holiday contrasts the ancient Mayan ruins of Tikal in the Petén rainforests with a glimpse of how the Maya live today, visiting the modern Mayan markets and communities which thrive to this day in the highlands west of Guatemala City.

You will explore the vast complex of temples at Tikal, perhaps Central America's most atmospheric ruined Mayan city, its haunting pyramids shrouded in exotic bird and monkey-filled jungle. Explore arty, volcano-framed Antigua, one of the continent's most beautiful Spanish colonial cities, and a wonderfully relaxing base for a couple of days. Move into the western highlands, the heartland of the Maya to this day, where tradition and ritual survives in the vibrant market towns and villages of the Quetzaltenango basin. Experience the Friday market at San Francisco El Alto, among the largest and most authentic in the country, where the Maya arrive from surrounding communities to trade and barter. Finally it's time to unwind in the spiritual surroundings of Lake Atitlán, fringed by volcanoes, visiting traditional villages, each with their unique dress code of handcrafted, intricate textiles.

Our holiday is timed to begin on a Saturday in order to coincide with market days in the highlands, which fall on specific days of the week. However, our Travel Experts know Guatemala well and can tweak or extended the itinerary according to your wishes and interests.

DAY 1

Arrive Guatemala City and transfer to your hotel.

Most flights arrive in the evening and it's just a 15-minute drive from the airport to your hotel in Guatemala City.

DAY 2

Fly to Flores, boat trip on Lake Petén Itzá



Departing in the morning, it's just an hour's flight to Flores in the Petén lowlands of northern Guatemala. Flores is set on a tiny island on Lake Petén Itzá. Its easy pace and dignified atmosphere is embodied in its genteel cobbled streets and ageing, red roofed houses, rising up a hill presided over by a twin-domed cathedral.

Flores has a rich legacy. The area where Flores now stands was originally the the capital of the Itza Maya whose descendants inhabit the forests and tropical lowlands. _____ _____ance.

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DAY 3

Visit the great Mayan city of Tikal and stay for sunset



It's just over an hour's drive from Flores to the vast Mayan archaeological site at Tikal.

Tikal's rainforest setting combined with the majesty of its structures is magical. Steep-stepped and vertiginous temples emerge high above the rainforest canopy; the views over the site from one of these ancient skyscrapers are unforgettable. Explore the jungle trails and palace complexes with your guide, staying on until dusk for the chance of one of Tikal's famously atmospheric sunsets before returning to Flores in the evening.

DAY 4

Fly to Guatemala City and transfer to Antigua, the elegant historic capital



Fly back to Guatemala City after breakfast and transfer to the country's former capital, Antigua, a 1-2 hour drive from the airport. With a springlike climate (altitude 1,500m) and genteel atmosphere, Antigua is a masterpiece of the Spanish colonial grid system 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's a welcoming place to relax and unwind, browse the boutiques and art galleries, and sample the menus on offer in some of the county's best restaurants. It seems that every doorway opens onto a fragrant tiled courtyard with a gurgling fountain or a café inviting you to linger.

DAY 5

Explore Antigua with your guide



Antigua's photogenic backdrop of smouldering volcanoes bears witness to the city's destruction a volcanic eruption in 1773. Exploring on foot with a local guide reveals the story behind this small city's very high density of historic buildings which earned it UNESCO World Heritage status in 1979.

There will be free time to continue your own wanderings. Alternatively we can pre-arrange an optional excursion to a community coffee plantation or weaving project depending on your interests.

DAY 6

Transfer across the Mayan highlands to Quetzaltenango



The journey to Quetzaltenango is a scenic 4-5 hour drive along the winding Panamerican highway which traverses the country. Around 2 hours into the journey, turn off the highway towards Iximché. This an archaeological site which dates back to the Mayan pre-conquest era and which nestles unassumingly amidst the rural communities and farmland which typifies Guatemala's fertile western highlands. Mostly overlooked by overseas visitors, Iximché is considered a hidden gem by those with a deeper interest in Maya history.

Quetzaltenango is the second largest city in Guatemala. In the heart of the Sierra Madre at 2,330m, it looks out over the surrounding volcanoes and enjoys a spring-like climate of warm days and cool nights. This workaday city has plenty of authentic character, and is an ideal base from which to explore the traditional highland towns in its orbit.

DAY 7

Visit the Friday market at San Francisco El Alto



The ability to cultivate crops, especially vegetables in the fertile Quetzaltenango basin means that the area has been populated by the Maya for centuries. Visit the bustling San Francisco El Alto market (Friday is market day). This is a rough and ready, off-the-beaten track experience, and as you amble around you can find anything from textiles and coffee beans through to the more unusual produce such as ducks and piglets. It is where the locals from the neighbouring villages gather to buy, sell and trade their products. It is the largest market in Central America and interestingly has largely stuck to its Mayan roots and traditional methods.

Zunil and Almolonga are also typical vibrant market towns, where women dressed in traditional tunics (huipils) gather to trade in all manner of crops, including carrots and leafy green vegetables. You'll pass through these villages with time to stop and look around both villages which shelter at the foot of spectacular volcanoes. Although their market days do not coincide with San Francisco El Alto, there's usually plenty of activity and local colour whichever day you visit.

DAY 9

Journey across the highlands to Lake Atitlán.



Travel along the winding highway towards Lake Atitlán, a 3 hour journey. The landscapes here are dominated by racing-green and tawny volcanoes and compact farming villages. The final

Lake Atitlán is one of the most captivating in the world and its beauty has been eulogised by poets and travellers. On a still sunny day, the closely forested volcanic cones are reflected in cobalt waters. For many visitors this is Guatemala at its best.

Traditional villages and indigenous agricultural settlements skirt its fertile shores, each with its own character and identity, its own dialect and often a unique costume still worn by the proud inhabitants.

DAY 10

Optional visit to Chichicastenango, Mayan town and market



Today is at leisure to relax and enjoy the lake or take a stroll around the main resort of Panajachel which became a backpacker haunt generations ago and retains a bohemian feel.

Or, take an optional excursion to Chichicastenango. In this misty mountain town the symbols and practices of Catholicism sit side by side or even amalgamate with esoteric Mayan religious ceremonies, centred round the simple, whitewashed façade of the church. On Thursdays and Sundays there is a vast, bustling market, and you can wander the labyrinthine streets. Here are textiles, clothes and tapestries of striking colour and extraordinary intricacy, as well as extravagant hand-carved masks and good-quality leather goods. Local farmers both barter and sell an array of fruit and vegetables from the surrounding villages. Continue to Quetzaltenango, Guatemala's second city which has subdued provincial air.

DAY 11

Guided day trip to lakeside villages.



Take a motor launch across the lake to Santiago de Atitlán. Cruising over the calm and silent morning waters, you'll have wonderful views of the various shoreline hamlets and pocket-sized cultivated fields alongside some grand houses, and beyond to the gently sloping bottle-green volcanoes that encircle the water. You are greeted as you alight at Santiago by enthusiastic children, and the town is an excellent place to buy brilliantly coloured textiles.

The children may also offer to guide you to the current resting place of the smoking, drinking, be-hatted and roguish local idol, Maximón, who is moved to a different house each year, and looked after by a diligent entourage. He's certainly not politically correct but he will help you with your problems in exchange for a suitable financial donation.

After time at leisure to explore, bargain with the traders and admire the costumes you will again be transported by boat to another village, San Antonio Palopó, about 10km from Panajachel. It lies in a natural amphitheatre formed by the mountains behind it. Ascending the hill from the dock, you reach the village consisting of narrow streets of adobe houses with roofs of thatch or corrugated tin, and a fine 16th century church. The village inhabitants are known for their colourful costumes and headdresses.

DAY 12

Transfer to Antigua for a final night



Take a final look at the view before the transfer to Antigua, a 3 hour drive back across the highlands. Free time to spend the afternoon exploring or doing some final shopping. Antigua's upscale boutiques have some of Guatemala's finest quality goods.

DAY 13

Transfer to the airport in Guatemala City for your international flight.

UK clients arrive home the following day.

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Lake Petén Itza and Isla de Flores
- Tikal Mayan ruins and sunset
- Walking tour of Antigua
- Friday market at San Francisco El Alto
- Lake Atitlán's Mayan villages

ESSENTIALS

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS
12 days, 11 nights: Guatemala City 1; Flores 2; Antigua 2; Quetzaltenango 2; Lake Atitlán 3; Antigua 1

ACCOMMODATION
We use a mix of hotel styles in the mid-range and upper mid-range category, choosing accommodation we think offers the best combination of value, comfort, location and local character. Properties will vary in heritage from modern to traditional-style countryside properties.

TRANSPORT
2 flights (longest 1hr); 4 scenic road journeys (longest 3hrs).

MEALS
Breakfast daily

GUIDES
Our local, trusted and carefully selected partners understand the expectations of our customers very well, and their staff and guides are consistently singled out for praise by clients on their return. On this holiday, you will be joined by different guides for each activity and or region, ensuring you benefit from specialised expertise and knowledge, often from someone local to the area.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS
As well as any included activities, this Private Journey includes some free time for optional excursions. As optional excursions are often subject to availability, we recommend you discuss and arrange them with your Travel Expert as early as possible before you depart.

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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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