JOURNEY
LATIN AMERICA



CLASSIC GROUP TOURS

KINKAJOU: BEST OF GUATEMALA AND BELIZE

12 days from **£3,217pp**

GUATEMALA / ANTIGUA AND THE HIGHLANDS / LAKE ATITLAN AND VILLAGES / BELIZE / MAYA MOUNTAINS AND JUNGLE



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

This small group escorted tour visits two countries with contrasting cultures and landscapes: Spanish and Mayan Guatemala, with volcanoes and traditional villages and British Caribbean influenced Belize, with coral beaches and rainforest adventures.

	UK clients depart, arriving in Guatemala the same day.
DAY 1	**Transfer to colonial Antigua.**
DAYS 2-3	**Explore the city, with guided walks.**
DAY 4	**By road to Lake Atitlán via the market at Chichicastenango.**
DAY 5	**Excursion on Lake Atitlán.**
DAY 6	**At leisure to further explore the lakeside.**
DAY 7	**Drive to Guatemala City; fly to Flores.**
DAY 8	**Guided exploration of the Mayan archaeological site Tikal.**
DAY 9	**Drive across the Belize border to Chaa Creek.**
DAYS 10-11	**Outdoor activities and excursions.**
DAY 12	**Depart for international flight or extension.**
	UK clients arrive home the following day.

ITINERARY

This variety-packed escorted group journey combines two countries which couldn't be more different. Guatemala is steeped in native Mayan indian and Spanish colonial tradition plus religious mysticism. Belize, a truly Caribbean country, is English speaking, utterly laid-back, and a popular destination for some outdoor adventure. It's a real treat to be able to combine the two into one experience-packed holiday.

Start off in Antigua, Guatemala's colonial masterpiece, and continue to the serene setting of Lake Atitlán, encircled by volcanoes, – pocket handkerchief sized fields and time-warped indigenous villages.

Continue to Tikal, the vast Mayan city where ancient temples and pyramids penetrate the rainforest canopy. Crossing the border into Belize, stay at a remote countryside lodge surrounded by tropical foliage rich in wildlife; enjoy the thrills and spills of outdoor activities, or just relax. Overall, you'll be enchanted by the friendly people, extraordinary architecture and diverse flora and fauna.

UK clients depart, arriving in Guatemala the same day.

DAY 1

Transfer to colonial Antigua.

Those passengers arriving on an international flight will be met by the tour leader and escorted to the group hotel in Antigua. It's a journey of about an hour along a winding paved road. This popular city is well-endowed with art galleries, restaurants, bars, coffee shops and boutiques.



DAYS 2-3

Explore the city, with guided walks.



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.

A dramatic backdrop of smouldering volcanoes and ruined churches and convents surrounded by parkland are testament to the city's destruction by a volcanic eruption in 1773. You'll have plenty of time to absorb this fascinating city, including a walking tour of the historic centre and a chance to taste some of the country's famed coffee.

There is plenty of free time so you can explore the surrounding volcanoes, visit nearby traditional villages or simply browse the markets and art galleries of Antigua.

DAY 4

By road to Lake Atitlán via the market at Chichicastenango.



Travel by a gradually-ascending road to Lake Atitlán. The landscapes in the highlands west of Antigua are dominated by watchful volcanoes and compact, busy farming villages.

Stop off en route at Chichicastenango (2 hours). This chilly mountain town, which has a decidedly mystical air, is where the symbols and practices of overt Catholicism sit side by side or even amalgamate with esoteric Mayan religious ceremonies, centred around the simple, whitewashed façade of the church. Here there is a vast, bustling market, and you can wander the labyrinthine streets lined with textiles, clothes and tapestries of striking colour and extraordinary intricacy, as well as extravagant hand-carved masks and good-quality leather goods. Local farmers also bring an array of fruit and vegetables from the surrounding villages, which they both barter and sell.

Later in the day continue onto Lake Atitlán (1 hour), one of the most captivating in the world, its beauty eulogised by poets and travellers. On a sunny day, the closely forested volcanic cones are reflected in cobalt waters. 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 5

Excursion on Lake Atitlán.



You are based in the peaceful village of Santa Catarina de Polopó, a few kilometres from the lively tourist centre Panajachel.

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.

DAY 6

At leisure to further explore the lakeside.



At leisure to explore the lake and its shores, peppered with tiny agricultural and fishing communities.

Each of the villages around the lake has its own traditional dress and speaks its own Mayan dialect. There is plenty of time here to relax and enjoy the peace and quiet or you can take to the lake by canoe, hire a bicycle or visit one of the nearby butterfly or animal parks.

DAY 7

Drive to Guatemala City; fly to Flores.

Drive back to the capital for an hour-long flight from Guatemala City that takes you to Flores, in the dense sticky jungles of northern Guatemala, and from here you continue to your lodge by road. It is situated on the shores of tranquil Lake Petén. There are many well-marked tracks to explore and lots of wildlife including monkeys to see, or you can relax by the swimming pool.

DAY 8

Guided exploration of the Mayan archaeological site Tikal.

Today there is a guided tour of the archaeological site at Tikal, an hour's drive away. Steep, stepped and vertiginous temples penetrate the forest canopy; the timeless rainforest views over the site from one of these temple-tops are unforgettable. Spend the day wandering through the palace complexes. Tikal was one of the largest and most important Mayan city states, reaching its peak in around AD800 prior to its mysterious demise. The pyramids and temples seem frozen in time, but you're brought back to the present by the roar of curious howler monkeys and lithe spider monkeys as they swing through the low branches of the trees, and flashes of colour as toucans and parrots take flight.



DAY 9

Drive across the Belize border to Chaa Creek.

This morning you depart for the little known Mayan ceremonial site of Yaxha, situated on the shores of a lagoon before enjoying a beautiful drive across the border and into Belize, passing through the town of San Ignacio and on into the low-lying Cayo district.

Spend a couple of days in the country's lush, unspoilt and sparsely populated hilly interior, based on the rain-forested banks of the Macal river.



DAYS 10-11

Outdoor activities and excursions.

Stay at the Lodge at Chaa Creek, one of the first of its kind in Belize. This tranquil jungle hideaway, set in its own rainforest, was opened by an Anglo-American couple in 1981. The focus here is on the area's natural attributes, and activities available include a stroll along some of the many orchid-lined trails, a canoe ride through the mustard-coloured waters of River Macal watching waterside creatures and birdlife emerge from its shoreline habitat.

If you're feeling more active you can explore the area on horseback or by bike. (Note: some of these excursions may incur an extra charge.) However, you may simply want to relax and enjoy the splendid tropical gardens, or be pampered in the spa. It's a little piece of paradise here, and the atmosphere is welcoming and informal. You might visit Mountain Pine Ridge where waterfalls, rivers, lakes and caves are surrounded by savannah and pine forest. Other excursions from your hotel include visits to Mayan archaeological sites at Xunantunich and Caracol.

DAY 12

Depart for international flight or extension.

UK clients arrive home the following day.

INCLUDED EXCURSIONS

- Antigua: Guided walking tour of Antigua
- Lake Atitlán: excursion by boat
- Chichicastenango: exploring the market
- Tikal: guided tour of the ruins
- Yaxha: guided tour of the ruins
- Chaa Creek: outdoor activities

ESSENTIALS

ABOUT OUR GROUP TOURS
To find out more about how our group tours including group sizes, solo travellers and why to choose us. Please click **here**.

TOUR LEADER
On this tour, you'll be accompanied by one of **our exceptional Journey Latin America tour leaders**. From the moment you land in Latin America they will deal with all the practicalities, expertly adapting to the circumstances and individual needs of the group. Rather than different guides in different cities, your leader will get to know the group and keep you informed and entertained as you go. They will spend the first night with you at your final destination Chaa Creek before leaving you with the experienced guides and staff at the exclusive lodge.

SUMMARY OF NIGHTS
12 days, 11 nights: Antigua 3, Lake Atitlán 3; Tikal 2; Chaa Creek 3.

ACCOMMODATION
We use the following mid-range and upper-mid range hotels on this tour. In Belize we stay in a first class lodge.

- Antigua: Meson de Maria
- Lake Atitlán: Villa Santa Catarina
- Lake Petén: Villa Maya
- Belize: Chaa Creek Lodge

On very rare occasions these hotels can change, however please speak to one of our consultants who can provide full details for each departure if you have any doubts. Address and contact details will be sent out with your final documents.

TRANSPORT
1 flight (1 hour), 4 land journeys (longest 4 hours). All land transport is operated privately for the group.

MEALS
Breakfast daily, lunch day 8, half-board days 9-11.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS
On this tour the price includes excursions in all the places you visit as per the itinerary. There will however likely be some free time when you may choose to take part in an optional excursion. These are booked locally through your tour leader once you are in Latin America, however we are more than happy to advise you of what is on offer in advance of your holiday so you can best plan the excursions that suit you.

TRAVELLING ALONE
There is no extra cost for single travellers who are willing to share a room. You will be accommodated with another same-sex member of the group who is also travelling solo. For single travellers who wish to have their own room there are a limited number of single rooms available, which carry a surcharge.

TRIP SUITABILITY
This journey moves at a gentle pace and there is plenty of time to relax in each location. All walks and excursions are optional, so speak to your tour leader if you have any doubts about their suitability. There are some early mornings, and in the lowlands temperature and humidity are high, and the sun is strong.

CLIMATE
Situated well within the tropics, Guatemala and Belize have a typical tropical climate with high temperatures all year round. May-Nov is rainy season but this wet season is characterised by short afternoon downpours rather than constant rain which relieve the heat somewhat. We therefore run this tour throughout the year.

Areas of Guatemala and Belize (including Antigua, Lake Atitlan and Chaa Creek) experience a much more comfortable

spring-like climate with sunny days and cooler evenings.

CLOTHING, EQUIPMENT AND LUGGAGE

A daypack is essential for carrying rainwear, snacks, books/tablet and a water bottle. For day-to-day wear you should take loose-fitting, breathable clothes. Comfortable shoes are important and sandals are useful. A sun hat, sun block and sunglasses are necessary, and you should take warmer layers for the cooler evenings, as well as swimwear, a towel and insect repellent. Binoculars are useful for wildlife spotting.

MONEY

Please see the Country Info tab on this holiday for our latest currency information and advice about how to take your spending money. Tipping in Latin America is almost always done using cash. It is customary to tip tour leaders, local guides, drivers, boat crews and other service providers such as restaurant staff and porters. Full tipping guidelines are sent with your confirmation documents as is advice on local costs.

HEALTH, ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND INSURANCE

For health information on travelling to Guatemala and Belize including recommended vaccinations, please see https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/

All Latin American countries have specific entry regulations related to Covid 19. Please also check our Travel Hub for further information.

Holders of a full British passport do not require a visa, although passports should be valid for at least 6 months after the trip begins. Other nationalities should enquire with us or check with the consulates.

Travel insurance is essential. Details of our recommended policy can be found on the Travel insurance website.

Our full briefing dossier contains more information on vaccinations, visas and insurance and will be provided with your final travel documents or can be requested from your travel consultant at any time.

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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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