EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Central American Highlights (CAQ 2015)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
16
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Full On
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
tour Code: CAQ

Tour Highlights - Central American Highlights

- ✓ Antigua - Explore this elegant colonial city, overlooked by three volcanoes
- ✓ Guatemalan Highlands - Visit the colourful Chichicastenango Market and Maya villages around Lake Atitlan
- ✓ Copan - Learn more about the ancient Maya culture at this UNESCO World Heritage Site, one of the greatest Maya ruins in the Americas
- ✓ Suchitoto - Enjoy the charms of this pretty colonial town beside the shores of Lake Suchitlan
- ✓ Leon and Granada - Discover these lively colonial cities, historic rivals for the title of capital city of Nicaragua

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	4 nights Comfortable Hotel 1 night Simple Hotel 9 nights Standard Hotel 1 night Standard Camping
Included Meals:	5 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Antigua
End Point:	Tour ends: San Jose
Transport:	Bus, Boat
Countries:	Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica

Central American Highlights

On this two-week adventure through Central America, we discover colonial towns in Nicaragua and El Salvador, explore bustling local markets in the Guatemalan highlands and search for wildlife in Costa Rica. Cruising along Lake Atitlan, we visit local villages - home to the Tzutujil Maya people. We also explore the ancient site of Copan in Honduras and uncover the rich history of the Maya kingdom.

Why Book this tour

Experience five Central American countries in just two weeks; explore the colourful Chichicastenango Market in Guatemala and discover the ancient Maya site of Copan in Honduras. Stay in the pretty colonial town of Suchitoto in El Salvador, see the sights of Leon and Granada, Nicaragua's colonial cities and view wildlife at Cano Negro Wildlife Refuge in Costa Rica.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.

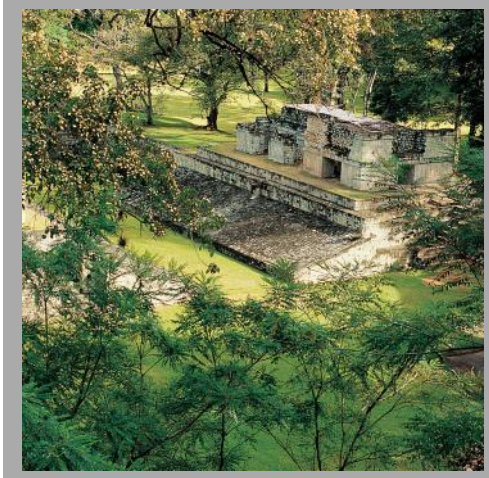
Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and



organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Antigua (Guatemala)

Our tour starts in Antigua de Guatemala, where we will check-in to our conveniently-located hotel which will be our base for the next two nights. Famed for its well-preserved Spanish Mudejar-influenced architecture, this graceful colonial city was founded early in the 16th century. Set in a beautiful valley between the volcanoes of Agua, Fuego and Acatenango, its cobbled streets and pastel-coloured buildings make it one of the most charming and picturesque cities in Central America. Despite the damage caused by a series of earthquakes and floods over the centuries, Antigua's colonial heritage has seen it designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Walking tour of Antigua, free afternoon to explore

This morning's walking tour takes us to some of the spectacular colonial churches for which the city is famed, including those of San Francisco, Santa Clara, La Merced and Las Capuchinas. The city is also famous for its jade, and we will visit a museum explaining more about this industry. Guatemalan jade is jadeite - a scarce and valuable form of the rock, which, contrary to popular belief, isn't always green. This afternoon has been left free for you to continue exploring at your own pace. You may choose to enjoy a bit of bargain hunting in what is regarded as one of the best cities for shopping in Central America. There is everything here, from high-end jewellery to street vendors selling locally-produced crafts and textiles.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 3 Travel to Panajachel; boat trip on Atitlan Lake

This morning, we continue our journey to the town of Panajachel on the shores of Lake Atitlan, which will be our base for the night. An old volcanic caldera, Lake Atitlan is considered to be one of the most spectacular lakes in the Americas and is certainly the deepest in Central America. Encircled by the volcanoes of Toliman, Atitlan and San Pedro, the lake's fertile shores are sprinkled with small communities of farmers and fishermen who still uphold the traditions of their Maya ancestors. Panajachel itself is an old Spanish settlement which has attracted visitors to this charming setting for years. Today, it is one of the region's most popular tourist spots, filled with galleries, handicraft shops and cafes, making it an ideal base from which to explore this captivating area. This afternoon, we head out by boat to explore one of the many Mayan villages surrounding the lake. Santiago Atitlan lies at the base of the volcanic peaks of Toliman and Atitlan, and is home to the Tzutujil Maya people. The Tzutujil can trace their ancestry back to the post-classic period of the Maya (around 900-1500 AD). They still wear a traditional form of dress, with the women in particular sporting colourful blouses with embroidered geometric and bird designs. Returning to Panajachel by boat, we have the remainder of the evening to explore the town and enjoy dinner in one of its many excellent restaurants.

Overnight: **Simple Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 4 Chichicastenango Market then drive to Copan (Honduras)

After an early start, we will head north towards the highlands of the El Quiche Province and the bustling town of Chichcastenango. Steeped in Mayan culture, the town is famed for its market, where you can buy everything, from chickens and copal, to pigs and pottery. Following our visit, we cross the border into neighbouring Honduras. After passing through a landscape of lush vegetation and mountainous valleys, we will reach Copan late in the afternoon. This lovely village of adobe buildings will be our base for the next two nights, ensuring that we are well-placed to explore the ruins of one of the most important sites of the Mayan civilisation.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 5 Visit the UNESCO Site of Copan, free afternoon

This morning, a local guide will escort us around the spectacular ruins of Copan - one of the richest archaeological sites to be uncovered in Central America and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Anyone familiar with Catherwood's incredible drawings (which first appeared in John Stephens' 1841 narrative - 'Incidents of Travel in Central America and Yucatan'), will recognise scenes and objects from this marvellous site. Stephens actually bought the entire site from a local farmer for just $50. The Great Plaza is one of

the most amazing achievements of the Classic Maya period and contains the greatest collection of Maya sculpture anywhere in Meso-America. Next door is the Acropolis - a group of massive pyramidal structures where royal power was once concentrated. Ascending one structure is the famous Hieroglyphic Stairway. Composed of some 2500 individual glyphs, its sides flanked by serpentine birds and snakes, this is the New World's longest inscribed Pre-Colombian text. Copan has been the subject of exploration and investigation since the 1830s. Remarkable finds continue to be unearthed by archaeologists, making it the most thoroughly researched and understood of all Maya sites. This afternoon has been left free for independent exploration of the site. Alternatively, you may choose to participate in one of several optional activities in the area including horse riding or relaxing in hot springs.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 6 Journey to Suchitoto (El Salvador)

This morning, we pass through scenic countryside, crossing over the border into our third country - El Salvador. After stopping off at the handicraft markets of La Palma, we continue on to Suchitoto. Nestled between the mountains and Suchitlan Lake, this charming colonial town, with its cobblestone streets and pretty houses, is a little slice of El Salvador at its timeless best. The town was once at the heart of the country's indigo trade. Today, as a rapidly developing centre for art and culture, Suchitoto is filled with craft shops and a rich vein of historic and cultural highlights, making it a wonderful place to explore and spend the next two nights.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel** **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 7 In Suchitoto, optional boat trip on the lake

Today has been left free for you to spend as you wish. Options include taking a boat trip out onto the lake, where over 200 bird species have been recorded, including hawks and falcons. Alternatively, you may choose to pay a visit to the nearby Cascada Los Tercios - a 30 metre-high waterfall which flows over an impressive cliff of tightly packed hexagonal basalt rocks.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel** **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Transfer to the colonial town of Leon (Nicaragua)

Before leaving El Salvador this morning, we will stop off in Illobasco - a town famous for its ceramics. Our journey continues through rich agricultural land and across the Honduras border. Following the Gulf of Fonseca, we cross into the Pacific lowlands of Nicaragua before completing our journey in the charming colonial town of Leon, where we will spend the next two nights. As the country's capital for 200 years, Leon is still considered the intellectual centre of Nicaragua. Lying in the shadow of seven volcanoes, its old buildings and massive cathedral contribute to the elegant atmosphere of a city that seems almost to have been trapped in time.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9 Free Day; optional hike to Cerro Negro Volcano

Today has been left free to explore this colonial gem at your own pace. Alternatively, you may choose to enjoy one of the optional excursions available in the area. One option is a hike on the nearby Cerro Negro Volcano - one of the most active volcanoes in Nicaragua. For something less exertive, Las Penitas Beach is a great place to relax for the day, whilst a visit to San Juan Venado Mangrove Reserve provides the opportunity to spot a wealth of wildlife, including crocodiles, caiman and iguanas.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 10 Travel to Granada via Masaya Volcano National Park

This morning, there will be time to explore a bit more of Nicaragua's former colonial capital, before we depart for the volcanic landscapes of the Masaya Volcano National Park. One of Nicaragua's most stunning natural highlights, the park was the country's first national reserve and is home to two volcanoes and five craters. We'll stop to view impressive geothermal activity at the Santiago Crater, before paying a visit to the park's visitor centre, where we will learn a little more about Central America's seismic history. We'll end our day in another of Nicaragua's colonial gems. Atmospheric Granada is situated at the foot of Mombacho Volcano on the north-west shore of Lake Nicaragua. It was the first colonial city in Nicaragua, founded in 1524 by the conquistador Hernandez de Cordoba. Its magnificent setting, set off by baroque and renaissance buildings, is a visual delight and a superb location for our next

two nights' accommodation. On arrival, our city tour will take in highlights such as the Parque Central, the monument to the War of Independence, the plaza and the San Francisco Convent. We also aim to visit the Casa des Tres Mundos and the neoclassical Bishop's Palace.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 11 In Granada; explore the city or optional sea kayaking

Today has been left free for you to discover more of the city at your own pace. Granada is the perfect city to explore on foot, wandering through narrow lanes and alleyways and uncovering hidden delights amongst the lush greenery and historic buildings. Alternatively, you may choose to visit Las Isletas by boat or sea kayak. This group of tiny islands just offshore is dominated by the Volcano Mombacho. Your Tour Leader will be more than happy to help arrange any excursions that you are keen on.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 12 Head to San Juan del Sur on the Pacific Coast

This morning, we head for Nicaragua's Pacific Coast for a chance to relax. Basing ourselves in San Juan del Sur for the night, this once sleepy fishing village is now a vibrant coastal resort and a summer favourite for travellers and locals alike. The variety of restaurants that line its waterfront overlook a bay that is lined with fishing boats and yachts. The town itself still retains a laid back ambience, providing us with a perfect place to break the journey and enjoy some welcome beach time. This afternoon, you may wish to visit some of the neighbouring beaches at Playa Mayagal or Maderas.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Included Meals: None

DAY 13 Travel to Cano Negro Wildlife Refuge (Costa Rica)

This morning, we cross the border into Costa Rica, with distant views of the Rincon de la Vieja Volcano. Our destination is the Cano Negro National Wildlife Refuge, where we will spend the afternoon enjoying a nature walk in the company of a local naturalist guide. Cano Negro lies in the centre of a flight path for millions of migrating bird species, making it an ideal stopping off point for glossy ibis, green backed herons, Nicaraguan grackle and roseate spoonbills.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Optional wildlife boat trip, before driving to Sarapiqui

Today, there is the option to take an early morning boat trip along the Rio Frio, in search of monkeys, sloths, iguanas and caimans. After breakfast, we continue on to La Virgen de Sarapiqui. A magnet for adventure-seekers, the Sarapiqui region contains a number of national parks and reserves, including the Braulio Carrillo National Park and the Sarapiqui Protected Zone. It is famed for its rich natural diversity and is home to the endangered Green Macaw. Tonight, we will camp among the flora and fauna of this rainforest setting. Our accommodation is in fixed tents with en suite facilities.

Overnight: **Standard Camping**
Your own tent available

Included Meals: None

DAY 15 Morning free. Afternoon head to the capital, San Jose

This morning has been left free to enjoy any number of optional excursions in the area. You may choose to hike, horse ride, or 'fly' through the jungle canopy on a zip-wire, some 20-30 metres above the rainforest floor. Costa Rica has been rated as one of the best whitewater rafting destinations in the world and this morning also provides an opportunity to tackle the foaming torrents of the Sarapiqui River. Classified as a Grade III river, the Sarapiqui is fringed by lush vegetation that provides an ideal refuge for toucans, monkeys, parrots and all manner of birdlife. This makes it the perfect setting in which to combine exhilarating rafting with a stunning natural backdrop. All safety equipment will be provided and the excursions are run by professional and trained guides. This afternoon, we continue through the scenic grandeur of the Braulio Carillo National Park to San Jose, Costa Rica's colourful capital. Founded in 1738 and set in a fertile valley blanketed in a lush abundance of coffee and sugar cane plantations, the city is one of the youngest

and most cosmopolitan capitals in Central America. A final evening in this vibrant city provides a fitting end to our remarkable journey across this incredible region.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 16 Tour ends San Jose

Our tour ends after breakfast this morning.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 5 breakfasts, 0 lunches,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Guatemala

Lunch £: 9.00

Dinner £: 17.00

Honduras

Lunch £: 7.00

Dinner £: 10.00

El Salvador

Lunch £: 8.00

Dinner £: 12.00

Nicaragua

Lunch £: 5.00

Dinner £: 8.00

Costa Rica

Lunch £: 10.00

Dinner £: 13.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Guatemala

Bottle of Beer £: 1.20

Water £: 0.70

Honduras

Bottle of Beer £: 1.75

Water £: 2.00

El Salvador

Bottle of Beer £: 1.20

Water £: 1.70

Nicaragua

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 0.80

Costa Rica

Bottle of Beer £: 1.80

Water £: 1.30

International Departure Taxes

Please allow US$ 40 for border crossings. San Jose Airport Departure tax US$ 28.

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Antigua - Coffee Finca - US$ 25
Copan - Macaw mountain US$ 15, Horse riding US$ 25, Hot Springs - USD$ 35
Suchitoto - Indigo Dye Museum US$ 25; Lake Suchitlan US$ 25 (based on 4 people), Cookery classes USD$ 12 per person (minimum 5 people)
Leon - Las Penitas and Juan Venado Reserve US$ 45; Iguana farm US$ 25; Cerro Negro Hike US$ 30
Granada - Boat to Las Isletas US$ 25 based on 4 sharing, Kayak US$ 35, Canopy/zip lining US$ 40
San Juan del Sur - Surf lessons US$ 35hr. Board hire US$ 10 per half day
Cano Negro - Boat trip US$ 30 pp; Night walk US$ 20pp (minimum 6 people)
Pozo Azul - Hiking US$ 27, Canopy/zip lining US$ 56, Horseback riding US$ 48, Rafting US$ 58 Snake garden US$ 30

Tipping - Tour Leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US$50 for tipping.

Foreign Exchange

Guatemala

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: Quetzal

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US$400-$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Honduras

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: Lempira

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US$400-$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

El Salvador

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: US Dollar

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US$400-$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns. Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival. Exchanges at border.

Nicaragua

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: Cordoba

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US$400-$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Costa Rica

ATM Availability: Available in Major towns. Always have some cash as back-up as they are not always reliable

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a 10% service charge

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be awkward or expensive to change

Local Currency: Costa Rican Colon.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling or Travellers Cheques which are more difficult to exchange. We recommend to take a minimum of US$400-$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange. USD can be used in some paces in Costa Rica

Where to Exchange: Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific ‘Joining Instructions’ prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip between 01 January 2015 and 31 August 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

El Salvador: Citizens of the UK and most EU citizens do not require a visa. Nationals of Canada, Greece, Portugal and USA must buy a tourist card (current cost 10USD)on arrival, this is valid for 30 day from entry.

Costa Rica: Citizens from the UK, US, Canada and most EU countries do not require a visa for a stay up to 90 days. Citizen of Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland do not require a visa for stays up to 30 days.

Nicaragua: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens.

Honduras: Citizens from UK, New Zealand, Australia, New Zealand and most EU national do not require a visa.

Guatemala: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens.

Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

USA (If flights transit): According to US law, passengers will have to disembark, collect luggage and clear immigration before re-boarding for the onward flight.

Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). This applies if you enter the country by sea or by air on a carrier participating in the visa waiver scheme, holding a return/ onward ticket. The passport requirements are that it must be machine readable, and must contain a digital photograph of the holder and also an integrated circuit chip that stores biographic information.

All passengers travelling to the USA under the Visa Waiver Programme must provide their details online no later than 72 hours prior to travel. British travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely to be detained and sent home.

When completing an application for transit you should enter the words ‘In Transit’ with your final destination location in the address line. Anyone applying for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ESTA) to travel under the Visa Waiver system will be charged a fee of 14USD (9GBP).
For more information, and to apply online, please visit the following website at https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov. Once obtained, the application will be valid for a period of two years, or for the validity of your passport (whichever is shorter).

For more information about who is eligible for the VWP, or any other questions you may have regarding your eligibility, or machine readable passports, please contact your local consular office, or visit www.usembassy.org.uk

Vaccinations & Protection

Guatemala

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on malaria. Please note: If you are entering from any of the following countries (Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, French Guyana, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Gambia and Sudan) are now required to produce an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis documenting yelllow fever vaccination before entry to Costa Rica will be granted. Certificates are valid 10 days after the date of vaccination. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Honduras

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on malaria. Please note: If you are entering from any of the following countries (Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, French Guyana, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Gambia and Sudan) are now required to produce an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis documenting yelllow fever vaccination before entry to Costa Rica will be granted. Certificates are valid 10 days after the date of vaccination. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

El Salvador

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on malaria. Please note: If you are entering from any of the following countries (Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, French Guyana, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Gambia and Sudan) are now required to produce an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis documenting yelllow fever vaccination before entry to Costa Rica will be granted. Certificates are valid 10 days after the date of vaccination. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Nicaragua

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on malaria. Please note: If you are entering from any of the following countries (Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, French Guyana, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Gambia and Sudan) are now required to produce an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis documenting yelllow fever vaccination before entry to Costa Rica will be granted. Certificates are valid 10 days after the date of vaccination. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Costa Rica

Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure. Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Guatemala

In the high plains (1524m-1981m) the climate is temperate all year round. In lower areas the climate is semi-tropical. The mountains can be cool especially at night. In general, the dry season in Guatemala lasts from Nov - April. From May to October there are often fine mornings and clear evenings but afternoon rains tend to be heavy. The Peten lowlands tend to be rainy all year round though less so from February to April.

Honduras

Climate change varies depending upon altitude. Mid range temperatures reach about 28°C. Rainfall is low to moderate with May to October being the wettest season. Temperature ranges in the lower reaches of the slopes and along the coast are more constant, with less rainfall.

El Salvador

Has a tropical climate with wet and dry seasons. The Pacific lowlands are hot; the central plateau and mountain areas are more moderate. The rainy season extends from May to October. Rainfall during this season generally comes from low pressure over the Pacific and usually falls in heavy afternoon thunderstorms. From November through April, El Salvador is dry and hot.

Nicaragua

Tropical, with little seasonal variation in temperature. The heavy rainy season is May to October but it can rain at any time along the Caribbean coast of Rio San Juan. There are 3 main climactic zones, the hot tropical lowlands and the cooler hill region, which has a larger range of daily temperature.

Costa Rica

Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page. Costa Rica has a tropical climate with high temperature humidity and rainfall. The average temperature is 21°C in the highlands and variable in the lowlands. The rainy season is from May to November and the summer from December to April, but it does still tend to rain, usually in short bursts. Bear in mind that Costa Rica has 12 microclimates and weather can vary significantly in one day.

Clothing

Lightweight clothing is essential though a warmer sweater is advisable for cooler evenings in the highlands. A waterproof is essential. The jungle lowlands are hot and muggy, and it can rain at any time of year. Long trousers and long-sleeved shirts are recommended on jungle walks.

Equipment

Bring a torch, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, beach towel, and a waterproof bag for your camera. Binoculars are very useful for bird and animal spotting. An umbrella can be useful in short downpours.

Footwear

Comfortable walking boots or shoes and trainers or sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of luggage and a day bag. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage - don't overload yourself. Sleeping bags are not required.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Guatemala

Population: 13,276,517

Size of Country: 108,890 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: Catholic and Protestant

Time Difference to GMT: -6

Honduras

Population: 8,249,574

Size of Country: 112,492 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: Roman Catholic and Protestant

Time Difference to GMT: -6

El Salvador

Population: 6,134,000

Size of Country: 21,040 sq km

Major Language: Castilian

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: -6

Nicaragua

Population: 5,891,199

Size of Country: 130,373 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: -6

Costa Rica

Population: 4,608,426

Size of Country: 51,100 sq km

Major Language: Spanish

Religion: Christian, Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: -6

Electric Supply & Plugs

Guatemala

2 Pin Flat

Honduras

2 Pin Flat

El Salvador

2 Pin Flat

Nicaragua

2 Pin Flat

Costa Rica

2 Pin Flat

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is ‘Available’ or ‘Guaranteed’ we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

These tour notes were printed on 05/08/2015 11:20:27