

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Kingdom of the Maya (DMX 2017)



TRIPDURATION
15
DAYS



Tour Style: Premium

Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups

Accommodation

Grade: Premium

Trip Code: DMX

Trip Highlights - Kingdom of the Maya

- ✓ Antigua - Explore this elegant colonial city
- ✓ Copan - Discover one of the greatest Maya ruins in the Americas
- ✓ Tikal (Guatemala) - The Maya metropolis where temples scattered over a vast area stand out tall above the surrounding jungle
- ✓ Palenque - Arguably the most enchanting of the ancient Maya ruins, set in dense jungle
- ✓ Chichen Itza - A spectacular Maya Toltec site, now declared one of 'The New Seven Wonders of the World'

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 11 nights Premium Hotel
1 night Standard Hotel
2 nights Hotel

Included Meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Antigua

End Point: Trip ends: Cancun Airport

Transport: Bus, Boat

Countries: Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico

The Kingdom Of The Maya

We cross Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico on this trip of some of the most spectacular ancient Maya sites. Staying in comfortable hotels, we discover hidden Maya cities deep in the rainforest and visit beautiful colonial towns. Sites visited include the Maya-Toltec site of Chichen Itza, the enchanting site of Palenque set in dense jungle, the Maya metropolis of Tikal, and Copan, one of the best preserved sites in Central America.

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.

Accommodation Grade: Premium

Our comfortable accommodation is hand-picked and chosen for its character, location or local importance. These properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service.

Tour Style: Premium

These tours are perfect if you want to combine an original, off-beat classic adventure with the added comfort of hand-picked accommodation chosen for its character, location or local importance. Revel in adventurous days followed by relaxing nights.

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 trip 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 trip in Antigua (Guatemala)

Arrive Antigua and check-in to the hotel. Famed for its well-preserved Spanish Mudejar influenced Baroque architecture, the stunning city of Antigua de Guatemala was founded in the early years of the 16th century. Set in a beautiful valley between the volcanoes Agua, Fuego and Acatenango, a tour of this graceful old colonial city, with its cobbled streets and lovely old buildings, identifies it as one of the most charming in the country and one of the most picturesque in Central America. Despite the damage caused by a series of earthquakes and floods over the centuries, the city's colonial heritage has seen it designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Hotel Posada Don Rodrigo

You'll be warmly welcomed into this traditional colonial-style house built around a large central plaza, where local artists often display their wares. The rooms in the



Hotel Posada Don Rodrigo, although simply furnished, ooze character and are clean and comfortable. The hotel's restaurant also comes highly recommended.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Antigua city tour

The stunning city of Antigua is set in a beautiful valley between the volcanoes of Agua, Fuego and Acatenango. This graceful old colonial city, with its cobbled streets and magnificent old buildings, identifies it as one of the most charming in the country and shows how it can justly claim to be one of the most picturesque in Central America. This morning we intend to take a walking tour of the centre with a local guide, visiting the churches of San Francisco, Santa Clara, La Merced and Las Capuchinas. Once the country's graceful capital and the first fully planned settlement amongst Spain's New World colonies, much of the city has been repeatedly devastated by earthquakes, yet has still managed to retain an elegant charm, whilst its buildings and ruins give it the air of a snapshot in time. This afternoon has been left free for you to explore more of this fascinating city or relax back at the hotel.

Hotel Posada Don Rodrigo

You'll be warmly welcomed into this traditional colonial-style house built around a large central plaza, where local artists often display their wares. The rooms in the Hotel Posada Don Rodrigo, although simply furnished, ooze character and are clean and comfortable. The hotel's restaurant also comes highly recommended.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Free day in Antigua

Today has been left at leisure for you to further explore the area. You may wish to spend the day in the lovely colonial Antigua, wandering through the markets or visiting one of its many museums. Alternatively, you can venture further afield. One option is to take a full day trip to Panajachel from where you can take a boat trip on Lake Atitlan, a former volcanic crater resulting from an eruption over 80 000 years ago. For the more energetic you may wish to take a hike on the still active Pacaya volcano. Pacaya lay dormant for over 100 years before it erupted in 1965 and it has been erupting continuously since, on your walk you can walk up as far as the lava field and get great views of the Valley of Antigua.

Hotel Posada Don Rodrigo

You'll be warmly welcomed into this traditional colonial-style house built around a large central plaza, where local artists often display their wares. The rooms in the Hotel Posada Don Rodrigo, although simply furnished, ooze character and are clean and comfortable. The hotel's restaurant also comes highly recommended.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Cross the border into Honduras and drive to Copan

This morning, we board our bus for the approximately six hour journey to Copan. En route we'll cross the border from Guatemala into Honduras, the second country on our journey through Mesoamerica. This afternoon as been left free to enjoy the facilities of the hotel or perhaps take advantage of the nearby therapeutic hot springs for a relaxing soak or massage or to visit Macaw Mountain (both optional).

Don Udo's Hotel

Don Udos has an authentic local feel with modern-day comforts such as a sauna, wi-fi and air-conditioned rooms. Senor Udo and his staff extend a warm welcome to all their guests and the serene courtyard garden is a great place to unwind. The hotels restaurant also serves excellent local and international cuisine.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Copan

This morning we visit this remarkable UNESCO World Heritage Site of Copan with a local guide. Everyone 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 area for US\$50 from a local farmer! Our exploration of the archaeological park begins with the Great Plaza, one of the most amazing achievements of the Classic Maya period (AD 750), which contains the greatest collection of Maya sculpture anywhere in Mesoamerica. Next to the Great Plaza is the Acropolis, a group of massive pyramidal structures where royal power was once concentrated, and which hold beneath them a wealth of information about Copan's ancient past. 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. The

subject of exploration and investigation since the 1830s, the continual discoveries being unearthed by archaeologists are uncovering remarkable finds that represent a Maya resurrection and have made Copan the most thoroughly researched and understood of all Maya sites. The afternoon has been left free for you to remain on site and explore at your leisure, perhaps utilising the time to visit the museums and learn a little more about what was once one of the most significant city-states in the Maya world. This evening there will be an option to enjoy a barbecue dinner amidst the lush highlands.

Don Udo's Hotel

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Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Drive to Rio Dulce via Quirigua

Leaving early this morning we head back across the border into Guatemala, towards the small site of Quirigua, lying on the western fringes of the Sierra de Espiritu. Once an important trading centre between Tikal and Copan, this UNESCO Heritage Site is home to the tallest stelae to be found anywhere amongst the ruins of the ancient Mayans. Explored by Catherwood and Stephens in the mid 19th century, Quirigua reached its zenith during the 8th century, becoming an independent kingdom that controlled much of the surrounding Motagua Valley, before being abandoned sometime during the 9th century. The impressive stelae tell of the wars with nearby Copan, of the beheading of the Copan king and the emergence of Quirigua from the shadow of its powerful neighbour. The tallest of the stelae reached an impressive 12 metres and over a period of some 55 years the rulers of this tiny kingdom had a new monument erected every 5 years. After this we continue to Rio Dulce where we will spend the night.

Hotel Catamaran

Hotel Catamaran is situated in the Rio Dulce Jungle on Catamaran Island, offering a relaxing setting with views of beautiful lakes and rivers and archeological monuments from the Mayans. The hotel accommodation is in en suite bungalows, some with air conditioning and others with fans, and all with views of Lake Rio Dulce. The Catamaran Bar, constructed over the water, is famous for its Margaritas and Pina Coladas.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 Drive to Tikal; optional sunset visit

This morning we drive to Tikal, site of one of the greatest of all Maya cities. Tikal can easily be compared with the masterpieces of Egypt and Greece. Initially settled about 600 BC, it was abandoned by its rulers around AD 890 and totally deserted a hundred years later. Rediscovered in 1848, the site itself comprises many great temples and pyramids, covering an area of more than 16 square kilometres, with palaces, causeways, ball courts, spacious plazas, and hundreds of other architectural ruins - a superb example of sophisticated Maya engineering. At its height the extended area of the city and its environs covered some 100km and its population was estimated at between 50,000-100,000. Many of the main buildings were completed between the 6th and 9th centuries, during what was called the Late Classic Period, during which the city traded with Quirigua, Copan and even Teotihuacan to the far west. Economic instability, civil unrest and warfare finally brought the city down, echoing a general demise amongst the Maya civilisation. The remote jungle setting, with the constant companionship of Howler monkeys and parrots, gives the site a feeling of true isolation and its pyramid towers slicing through the lush canopy affords it an almost mystical feel. Our accommodation for the night is near the entrance of the site. You may wish to take the opportunity to visit the site to see the sunset. (optional)

Hotel Tikal Inn

Hotel Tikal Inn is located in the Tikal National Park - it sits on the edge of the jungle only ten minutes' walk from the centre of the Mayan Ruins, Plaza Mayor. The hotel has traditional Mayan architecture and provides a comfortable setting to relax and enjoy the natural beauty of the Tikal National Park.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Discover the Maya site of Tikal

Today will be spent exploring the site with a local guide. This afternoon, is free to further explore the rest of the site or you may wish to take time to visit the on-site museum (optional). Today there is a second opportunity to visit the site for the sunset.

Hotel Tikal Inn

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Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Visit the jungle site of Bonampak, drive to Palenque (Mexico)

This morning we head to Bethel on the river Usumacinta where we leave Guatemala and cross the border into Mexico by boat to Frontera Corozal. From here continue by road to the fascinating site of Bonampak. Famed for its incredible murals, Bonampak is a superb example of Classic Mayan art. The murals depict the rituals and lives of the ruling elite, including some pretty grim depictions of torture and death for its unfortunate captives. First revealed to the outside world in 1946, these remarkable murals capture a time of sumptuous pomp and ceremony and provide an interesting snapshot into the lives of the elite of Maya hierarchy and perhaps a reason for the civil unrest and eventual decline of the order. From here we continue towards one of the most beautiful ancient sites anywhere in Latin America, Palenque.

Hotel Chankah

The rooms in the Hotel Chankah are situated in individual small cabins or 'casitas' which are nicely furnished with all the necessary facilities. The hotel boasts a large pool and a restaurant that serves a good mix of local and international food. The location is also ideal, being just a short distance from the ruins of Palenque, also hidden in the rainforest.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Explore Palenque, optional Misol Ha Waterfalls

This morning we will visit the site in the company of a local guide, visiting the intricate labyrinth of buildings that surround the palace and temple, its four-storey tower dominating the city. Engulfed by the rainforest and often shrouded in mist, the palaces and ruins of Palenque were only discovered in the 19th century. Once the choking forest was cleared, the ruins revealed the tomb of the high priest Pakal, his body adorned with a marvellous jade death mask - one of the most prized relics of the Maya culture, only discovered in 1952. Evidence indicates that the site was first occupied more than 1500 years ago and reached its zenith around 600-700AD, when many of the plazas and buildings were constructed, all without the use of metal tools, pack animals or the wheel. Palenque flourished for some 600 years, between the 4th and 10th centuries, but it was under the reigns of Pakal and Chan-Bahlum during the 7th century AD that saw it reach the peak of its prestige and power. Many of the buildings that we see today date from this period, including the Temple of the Inscriptions and its tomb (closed to visitors). At the centre of the city lies El Palacio, with its unique tower and intricate reliefs. Later this afternoon there will be an option to stay on the site and explore further, or perhaps take an optional trip out to swim at the picturesque waterfalls of Misol Ha.

Hotel Chankah

The rooms in the Hotel Chankah are situated in individual small cabins or 'casitas' which are nicely furnished with all the necessary facilities. The hotel boasts a large pool and a restaurant that serves a good mix of local and international food. The location is also ideal, being just a short distance from the ruins of Palenque, also hidden in the rainforest.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Drive to Campeche via Champoton

Leaving early this morning we drive along the gulf coastline to the pleasant colonial city of Campeche, the state capital and once one of Spain's main ports in Mexico. En route we will stop for lunch at the fishing village of Champoton. On arrival in Campeche this afternoon there will be time to wander around the old port where defensive walls and fortresses are still in evidence. Although Campeche is not on the usual tourist trail it does boast an elegant and well-maintained colonial quarter with 18th and 19th century houses painted in soft pastel colours.

Castelmar Hotel

The building that houses the Castelmar Hotel dates back to 1800. It was initially built to be used as army barracks, but then became one of the first hotels in Campeche City, and remained as such for almost a century. The rooms are decorated with colonial style; they have original tile floors, high ceilings with wood beams, cedar furniture and completely new bathrooms.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Visit Uxmal; drive to Merida

We start this morning with a short drive to Uxmal. Encircled by hills, Uxmal is expansive in its design, with majestic palaces, temples, pyramids and long geometrical friezes that rank amongst the most splendid examples of ancient American art anywhere. The incredible Pyramid of the Magician and the beautiful Governor's Palace must also rate as two of the finest examples of Mayan art on the entire continent. Today we will visit this extraordinary site, spending some time exploring what for many is considered the crowning glory of Puuc architectural style, with its classical lines and abstract designs. Leaving Uxmal behind we continue on to Merida - famed for its beautiful Spanish- Moorish style architecture. Known as the 'White City', Merida is the capital of the state of Yucatan

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and its centre reflects its colonial heritage, with a church or mansion on every street and its plazas alive with markets, entertainment and visitors. Indeed the city is probably the most European in feel than any other in Mexico.

Casa del Balam

The Casa del Balam is said to be one of the finest of Merida's downtown colonial hotels and perfectly situated to explore the main plaza, cathedral and museums. The beautiful lobby is situated within a former family home and reflects a delightful blend of spanish tiles, terracota, carved stone arches and walled gardens. The air conditioned rooms are elegantly decorated with colonial antiques, wrought iron accesories, and marble floors.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **13** Free day in Merida

Today is a free day with optional excursions available.

Casa del Balam

The Casa del Balam is said to be one of the finest of Merida's downtown colonial hotels and perfectly situated to explore the main plaza, cathedral and museums. The beautiful lobby is situated within a former family home and reflects a delightful blend of spanish tiles, terracota, carved stone arches and walled gardens. The air conditioned rooms are elegantly decorated with colonial antiques, wrought iron accesories, and marble floors.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **14** Visit Chichen Itza, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World

Today we discover Chichen Itza. One of the most outstanding archaeological ruins in Central America, Chichen Itza was founded in AD432, re-founded in 987 and reputedly conquered by the Toltecs in the 10th century, the culture of the Maya and the Toltec gradually fusing together to create an amalgam of designs and influences. The pyramids, palaces, temples and ball court (where death was the penalty for defeat) are adorned with astonishing sculptures. Believed to have reached its zenith during what was termed the Terminal Classic Period (800-1000AD), the city's origins can be traced back some 500 years previously and there is some debate still as to the influence that the Toltecs had on the city and its architectural styles. Whatever its origins and influences though, little can detract from what is, for many, the quintessential image of a Maya city. We will actually explore the city today during the quieter periods, allowing more time to soak up the feel and ambience of this most magical of settings. The buildings to the north are dominated by the imposing presence of El Castillo (also known as the Pyramid of Kukulcan), a remarkable building that is in fact a stone representation of the Maya calendar, its summit decorated with symbols of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent. One unique feature of the building occurs at sunset on the spring and autumn equinoxes, when the heads of the serpents at the foot of the staircases are joined to their tails at the top by the shadows cast by the setting sun. The 'Toltec Plaza' is littered with more structures, including the Temple of the Warriors and the Group of a Thousand Columns, whilst the ball court that occupies its western edge is largest of its kind anywhere.

Hotel Mayaland

The Mayaland Hotel is a creation of Old Yucatan style hacienda with an air of genteel hospitality and old-fashioned charm. With over 100 acres of gardens and its superb location makes it a unique place to overnight.

Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **15** Trip ends at Cancun Airport

Today we drive to Cancun Airport where the trip ends.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this trip. 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 Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip 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 £: 4.00 - 6.00

Dinner £: 8.00 - 10.00

Honduras

Lunch £: 7.00

Dinner £: 10.00

Mexico

Lunch £: 7.00

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 £: 2.00 - 4.00

Water £: 1.00 - 2.00

Honduras

Bottle of Beer £: 1.75

Water £: 2.00

Mexico

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 0.70

International Departure Taxes

Guatemala: there is an entry tax of US\$2 / exit tax US\$2

Honduras: there is an entry tax US\$5.

Mexico: there is an exit tax of US\$35.

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 - Chichicastenango (non market day) and Panajachel US\$70 inc boat; Pacaya Volcano US\$30;

Copan - Macaw Mountain US\$ 10; hot springs US\$ 35, Museum of Sculpture US\$ 7; Visit tunnels US\$ 15 Visit Hacienda San Lucas Candlelit Dinner - US\$ 40

Tikal - Sunset tour on arrival - US\$ 15.

Palenque - Misol Ha us\$ 15 pp

Chichen Itza - Ik Kill Cenote swim - US\$ 10

Merida - Excursion to Celestun US\$120 (min 7 pers) inc. lunch; Dzibilchaltun US\$60 inc. guide; Mundo Maya Museum US\$25;

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\$60, - 15% is expected in restaurants.

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.

Mexico

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

Local Currency: Mexican New Peso

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.

Joining your Trip

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.

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

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>.

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 booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

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Travel Aware

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

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Mexico: Citizens from UK, New Zealand, Australia, US and Canada require a Mexican Tourist Card to enter. This is obtained from the consular office or at the check-in desk of the airline you are travelling with and will need to be kept until exit.

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

Honduras: Citizens from UK, New Zealand, Australia and most E.U nationals do not require a visa. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

USA: (including those in transit) 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) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely be refused boarding.

You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover.

If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and

instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel.

Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit)

For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html>

Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp>
Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.

Vaccinations & Protection

Guatemala

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. 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. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. 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.

Mexico

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended.. 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 Trip

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.

Mexico

Mexico is a country whose weather is very much determined by its geological make-up. Whatever time of year you visit the weather produces a range of diverse contrasts. The summer months (June to October) are generally the wettest, with the areas around Mexico City and Guadalajara averaging some 6 inches of rain in July, whilst the coastal areas like La Paz only get at most an inch.

Temperatures at this time of year can also vary greatly, from the mid 70s F in Mexico City, to the high 90s at La Paz. Winter is generally the busiest period, when rainfall is at a minimum and the daytime temperatures average a pleasant 72° across the region. Do bear in mind that at altitude the temperatures can drop considerably at night and sudden changes can occur at anytime.

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. Don't forget swimwear.

Equipment

Bring a torch, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, camera, a waterproof bag for your camera and motion sickness tablets/patches for the boat. 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 and a daysac. Please remember not to overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on trip: 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

Mexico

Population: 110,000,000

Size of Country: 1,972,000 sq km

Major Language: Spanish is the official language, but around 50 languages/dialects are also spoken by the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

Religion: Roman Catholic, Protestant

Time Difference to GMT: -6

Electric Supply & Plugs

Guatemala

2 Pin Flat

Honduras

2 Pin Flat

Mexico

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 & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of 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, 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.

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

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, 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) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

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 Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. 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 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip 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: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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