EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Kingdom of the Maya (DMX 2015)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
15
DAYS

Tour Style: Premium
Tour Pace: Busy
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Comfortable
tour Code: DMX

Tour 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'
- ✓ Caribbean - Relax on the white sand beaches of the Caribbean

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	14 nights Comfortable Hotel
Included Meals:	14 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Antigua
End Point:	Tour ends: Cancun Airport
Transport:	Bus, Boat
Countries:	Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico

The Kingdom Of The Maya

We cross Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico on this tour of some of the most spectacular ancient Mayan sites. Staying in comfortable hotels, we discover hidden Mayan cities deep in the rainforest and visit beautiful colonial towns dotted along the Gulf of Mexico, before relaxing by the Caribbean Sea. Sites visited include Copan, Tikal and Chichen Itza, as well as some lesser known ruins.

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: Comfortable

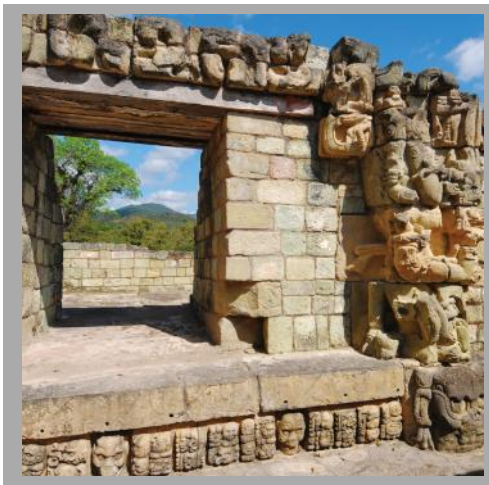
Hand-picked and chosen for their character, location or local importance, these properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

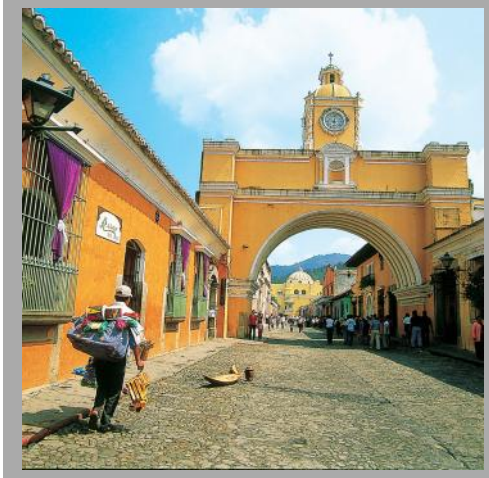
Tour Style: Premium

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: Busy

There may be early starts, long journeys and tiring days along the way, but you'll return home feeling you've really experienced as much as you possibly could.





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 in Antigua

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 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 4 Visit 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 5 Visit Quirigua, then drive to Flores

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. Leaving the site behind we then head north, crossing the Rio Dulce before continuing to the Flores, close to Tikal, site of one of the greatest of all Maya cities.

Hotel Casona Del Lago
Located in Santa Elena City, teh Hotel Casona Del Lago rooms are spacious and comfortable, offering good facilities, whilst outside the pool makes a great place to relax and retreat to after a day of sightseeing. The hotel restaurant is renown for its excellent cuisine.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Visit Tikal

We start today with a short drive to Tikal. 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. After exploring the site there's time to visit the on site museum (optional) before we return back to our hotel on the shores of Peten Itza Lake. This afternoon, if time allows, you may want to take an optional boat trip on the lake or visit Flores Island.

Hotel Casona Del Lago
Located in Santa Elena City, teh Hotel Casona Del Lago rooms are spacious and comfortable, offering good facilities, whilst outside the pool makes a great place to relax and retreat to after a day of sightseeing. The hotel restaurant is renown for its excellent cuisine.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Visit 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 8 Visit Palenque site, 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 9 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 10 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, templepyramids 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 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, catherdral 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 11 Drive via convent at Izamal to Chichen Itza

Built over, and partly from, the ruins of a Mayan city, Merida was founded in 1542 by Francisco de Montejo. Trade with Europe brought the city much of its wealth and at one time a substantial proportion of the world's rope was manufactured from Yucatecan henequen (green gold). It went on to become one of the richest cities in the country and boasts the oldest cathedral in Latin America, the imposing Cathedral of San Idelfonso. In 1849, during the Caste Wars, the Mayan armies besieged the city and came within a whisker of taking it and thus regaining control of the entire peninsula. Unfortunately for the Mayans, at that moment the peasants left the fight to return to their fields to plant corn and so the city was saved and the Yucatan was brought back under Mexican control. With its trading franchises all but forgotten and the riches of the past but a distant memory, the city still retains an air of elegance and vitality and this morning we have an opportunity to explore the bustling downtown area before we depart. This afternoon we will drive via the convent of Izamal, a once important Maya ceremonial site that become a focal point of the Spanish attempts at converting the locals to Catholocism. The colonial forces built the imposing Convent of St Anthony of Padua, a huge building that claims the honour of possessing the second largest atrium in the world on the foundations of a Mayan building. We then drive onto Piste, a small village to the east located close to the ruins of Chichen Itza.

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 12 Visit Chichen Itza and Tulum, drive via Valladolid to Akumal

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 Kukulkan), 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. After spending the best part of the day here, we'll then continue Tulum and Valladolid to the Caribbean town of Akumal. You will have an unguided visit of Tulum, the site is quite self explanatory after visiting Chichen Itza. The site of Tulum is a stunning set of Maya-Toltec ruins that occupy the cliffs overlooking the Caribbean.

Hotel Club Akumal Caribe
The Hotel Club Akumal Caribe is centrally located in the heart of the Maya Riveria. Akumal has clear blue-green waters and white sand beaches and directly offshore is the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. The hotel offers a spa, several cafes and a restaurant.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 Free day in Akumal

Hotel Club Akumal Caribe
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Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Free day in Akumal

The rest of the time has been left free for you to be as active or relaxed as you wish. You can choose to relax on the beach or perhaps take a side trip to one of the fascinating nearby sites. Your Tour Leader will be on hand to help organise any of these optional trips

Hotel Club Akumal Caribe
The Hotel Club Akumal Caribe is centrally located in the heart of the Maya Riveria. Akumal has clear blue-green waters and white sand beaches and directly offshore is the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef. The hotel offers a spa, several cafes and a restaurant.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15 Tour ends Cancun Airport

Today we drive to Cancun Airport where the tour ends.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 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

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 £: 1.20

Water £: 0.70

Honduras

Bottle of Beer £: 1.75

Water £: 2.00

Mexico

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 0.70

International Departure Taxes

Tax to enter and leave Guatemala by land - $2 each time
There is an entry tax to Honduras 5US$.
There is an exit tax from Mexico of 28US$.

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

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
Flores - Boat trip on Lake Peten Itza US$ 12.
Palenque - Misol Ha us$ 15 pp

Chichen Itza - Ik Kill Cenote swim - US$ 10
Akumal - Ek Balam Cenote - US$60, Sian Kaan - US$135

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, - 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 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 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.

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, New Zealand, 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, New Zealand and most EU national do not require a visa.

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.

Mexico

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria.Yellow Fever vaccination is required for travellers who are arriving from, or have transited through, countries with risk of yellow fever transmission. 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.

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 appreciably 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 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

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 & 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.

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