

# EXPLORE!

## TRIP NOTES



### Contrasts of Mexico + Yucatan Peninsula Extension (MXY 2017)



TRIPDURATION  
**21**  
DAYS



**Tour Style:** Classic  
**Tour Pace:** Full On

**Tour Type:** Small Groups  
**Accommodation**  
**Grade:** Standard

**Trip Code:** MXY

#### Trip Highlights - Contrasts of Mexico + Yucatan Peninsula Extension

- ✓ Palenque - Arguably the most enchanting of the ancient Maya ruins, set in dense jungle
- ✓ Oaxaca - Explore the streets and markets of this delightful UNESCO World Heritage city
- ✓ Tikal (Guatemala) - Discover this Mayan metropolis, where temples scattered over a vast area stand tall above the surrounding jungle
- ✓ Mexico City Anthropological Museum - An impressive collection of precolonial artefacts
- ✓ San Cristobal de las Casas - A beautiful highland colonial market town, surrounded by modern day Maya villages

#### Trip Essentials

**Accommodation:** 19 nights Standard Hotel  
1 night Simple Lodge

**Included Meals:** 1 breakfast, 0 lunches, 1 dinner

**Start Point:** Join trip: Mexico City  
**End Point:** Trip ends: Merida

**Transport:** Bus, Boat

**Countries:** Belize, Guatemala, Mexico

## Contrasts of Mexico and Yucatan Peninsula

This exciting journey explores the mysterious land of the Aztecs, Zapotecs and the Maya. From the valleys of Oaxaca in Mexico to the jungles of Guatemala, we tour colonial cities and discover ancient sites. We visit the impressive Maya sites of Tikal and Palenque, as well as lesser known sites of Monte Alban, Bonampak and Yaxchilan, and the pyramids at Teotihuacan. We also take a boat trip through the impressive Sumidero Canyon and visit the Mayan towns of San Cristobal and San Juan Chamula.

### Why Book this trip

We have planned some of the dates of this tour to coincide with the Day of the Dead Festival in Mexico. This festival is celebrated throughout Mexico and focuses on family and friends praying for and remembering loved ones who have died. You will witness the celebrations from Oaxaca.



### 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: Standard

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

### Tour Style: Classic

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

### Tour Pace: Full On

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

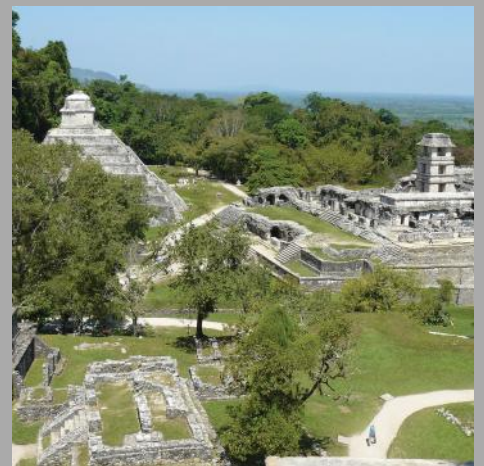
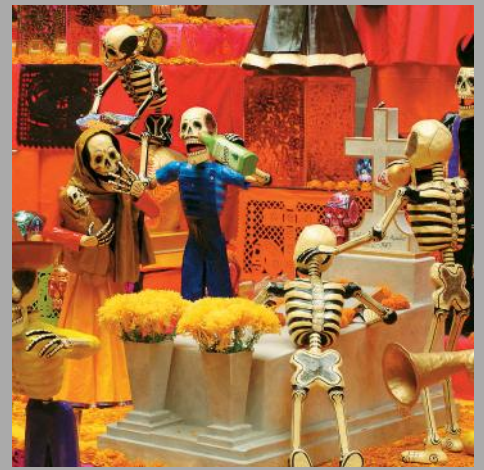
## Your trip itinerary

### 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.

### DAY 1 Join tour in Mexico City

Check-in at hotel in Mexico City. Modern day Mexico City was built on top of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan by the Spaniards, after their conquest of the city. Today this busy, lively, city boasts a wealth of historical buildings, museums and markets.



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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 2 Mexico City tour including the Museum of Anthropology

On our first day in Mexico City we visit the Zocalo (main square) area. The Cathedral and National Palace with many of Diego Rivera's remarkable murals on the history of Mexico are all built on top of Tenochtitlan the old Aztec capital. Afterwards we will visit the museum of Anthropology, one of the finest museums in the world, its exhibits offer a taste of the history ahead of us.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 3 Visit the Teotihuacan Pyramids and the Basilica de Guadalupe

The next day we will drive out to the mysterious pyramids of Teotihuacan. Although abandoned thirteen centuries ago, they are still an unbelievable sight. Once the largest city in the Americas with perhaps 100,000 inhabitants, its influence continued through Middle America, and Maya craftsmen borrowed its decorative motifs and building designs. Centuries later the Aztecs revered Teotihuacan as 'the Place of the Gods'. Returning downtown we visit the Basilica de Guadalupe.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 4 Journey to Oaxaca; free to explore the colonial city

Leaving the capital we drive south through cactus country to Oaxaca, one of the most charming colonial cities in Mexico. Arriving in the afternoon, we will have some free time to explore the city on foot. The colonnaded Zocalo comes alive at night as families come to stroll in the shade, while street vendors and entertainers vie for their attention. Oaxaca also has several colourful markets.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 5 Visit the ancient complex of pyramids of Monte Alban

Colonial Oaxaca was built with stones taken from ancient temples a few miles away. We explore the complex of temples, pyramids and enigmatic rock carvings at Monte Alban, a high spur that looms over the fertile valley. This mystical site was created by Zapotec Indians, who flourished here a thousand years ago. This afternoon there may be the chance to see some of the exquisite treasures of Monte Alban in the Regional Museum (known as the Louvre of Oaxaca) in town (optional).

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 6 Journey to Chiapa del Corzo via Mitla

During our full day journey, we stop to visit the 2000-year-old swamp cypress tree in Santa Maria del Tule just outside Oaxaca for a quick photo and then continue to the Mixtec/ Zapotec site of Mitla where we will have a picnic breakfast. We continue through the hot and windy isthmus of Tehuantepec and on to our night stop in Chiapa del Corzo, the provincial capital of Chiapas state, which we aim to explore over the next few days.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 7 Sumidero Canyon boat trip then head to San Cristobal

This morning we visit the spectacular Sumidero Canyon, a unique rift 41km long and up to 1000mts deep, cut by the Rio Grijalva. This is the spot where, in the 16th century, some 1000 Chiapa Indians committed suicide rather than submit to Spanish rule. We take a trip on a speed boat to fully appreciate the towering gorge, before driving up a scenic mountain road to San Cristóbal de las



Casas. On route we will visit San Juan Chamula where they practice an interesting blend of Catholicism and traditional religions before continuing to San Cristobal. At 2210m above sea level, it can get quite cold at night!

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 8 Free Day to explore San Cristobal de las Casas

There is a unique atmosphere to this small colonial and Indian town, high in the scenic Chiapas range. The small restaurants and shops provide ample opportunity to wander. Indians from the surrounding hills fill the town and marketplace with their colourful dress including the distinctive Tzotzil Indians who still retain much of their Mayan customs and language. The Indians are noted for their bright textiles and weavings in bold designs and this is the place to bargain for some colourful souvenirs. Today is left free for you to explore the area. You may wish to visit the Na Bolom, the House of the Jaguar, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Lacandón tribe and displays many of their artefacts or the Kakaw museum where you can learn about the history and production of chocolate in the area.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 9 Travel to Palenque via the Agua Azul Waterfall

Leaving the highlands, the road is slow and winding, but there are scenic views as we descend from the highlands to the jungles of Palenque. We plan to bathe at the waterfalls of Agua Azul before driving onto our hotel. The river tumbles over a series of limestone travertine's, forming natural jacuzzis, and is a popular Sunday picnic spot for Mexicans and travellers alike.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 10 Discover the important Mayan site of Palenque

One of the highlights of our tour is today's guided visit to the famous jungle ruins of Palenque, a fascinating and important Mayan site. 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, discovered only in 1952. The entire site, shrouded by the steamy rainforest, has an aura of deep mystery. During the afternoon you can continue to explore the site, or take a bus back to the waterfall of Misol Ha for a refreshing swim (optional). The stunning 30m high waterfall was featured in the titles of the movie 'Predator'.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 11 Drive to Frontera Corozal; travel by boat to Yaxchilan

Today we head into the Lacandon area to the ruins of Bonampak. The discovery of the well preserved murals at this site had a profound impact on our understanding of the Mayans. Continuing to Frontera, we board our lancha (river boat) on the Ucumacinta river and head for the remote site of Yaxchilan, famous for its stelae and roof combs. We continue back up the river through the rainforest to our overnight lodge near where we boarded our boat earlier today.

Overnight: **Simple Lodge**

 **Included Meals:** Dinner

## DAY 12 Head to Flores, optional boat trip on Lake Peten Itza

Our Mayan rainforest experience continues up river by boat to the small settlement of Bethel on the Guatemalan side before progressing by road to Flores, on Lake Peten Itza. The afternoon can be spent enjoying a leisurely boat trip on the blue waters of the lake (optional).

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

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 13 Explore the great Mayan metropolis of Tikal (Guatemala)

Today we visit Tikal, the great Maya metropolis set in the midst of the rainforest, which can justly be compared with the celebrated ancient cities of Egypt and Greece. Initially settled in about 600BC, Tikal was abandoned by its rulers around 890AD and totally deserted a hundred years later. The city covered an area of 16 square kilometres. Re-discovered in 1848, only a few of its great temples and pyramids have been excavated. The site is extensive, so we include a guided tour in the morning with the afternoon free to let you explore. We can appreciate the prolific birdlife in the surrounding rainforest and take in amazing views of the forest canopy from the tops of the pyramids.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 14 Travel to San Ignacio (Belize)

Today we drive over the border to San Ignacio in Belize. You may like to visit one of the nearby and little visited Mayan sites of Cahal Pech or Xunantunich.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 15 Drive to Belize City and boat to Caye Caulker

We drive to Belize City for our first view of the Caribbean and board our water taxi for the one-hour journey to the enchanting tropical island of Caye Caulker. Once a pirate lair, this tiny but beautiful island lies 34km northeast of Belize City and about 1.6km inside the greatest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 16 Relax on Caye Caulker; optional trip to observe manatees

The island remains uncrowded and unluxurious, and the local fishermen catch lobster, conch, fish and crab to supply domestic and foreign markets. It's a popular place with backpackers, so there is a proliferation of good, reasonably priced restaurants. There's time to relax or enjoy a number of optional trips. You may take a snorkelling trip out to the nearby Hol Chan Marine Reserve and Shark and Ray Alley, or take a full-day trip out to Goff's Caye to observe manatee in their natural mangrove habitat. Scuba diving is also available.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 17 Fly back to the mainland then drive to Valladolid via Tulum

Fly to Corozal, transfer to Belize border then drive to Tulum. The afternoon, time permitting, we explore this dramatically situated site perched atop a cliff overlooking the turquoise water and golden sands below. The ruins of Tulum date back to the late period of the Mayan civilisation when there was developing enmity between Mayan provinces, so the city is guarded by thick ramparts and a watch tower. After visiting the site we will continue onto Valladolid. Please note that on departures from 1st April inclusive, we will be flying from Caye Caulker to Corozal on a short 1-hour flight, before crossing the Mexico border and continuing to Tulum.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 18 Discover Valladolid before continuing to Piste

The morning is free to explore further the colonial heart of Valladolid. You may wish to opt to swim in one of the local cenote's (underground pools naturally formed in limestone and used by the ancient Maya as a source of water (optional)). This afternoon we will drive to Piste.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 19 Explore Chichen Itza; travel to Merida

This morning we visit the ruins of Chichen Itza. Founded in AD432, re-founded in 987 and conquered by the Toltecs in the 10th century, the culture of the Maya and the Toltec gradually fused. The pyramids, palaces, temples and ballcourt (where death was the penalty for defeat) are adorned with astonishing sculptures. Under the pressure of the civil war, the great monuments deteriorated and the Maya civilisation collapsed. Chichen Itza remains one of the most outstanding sites in the Americas. We then drive via the colonial backwater of Izamal to Merida, famed for its beautiful Spanish-Moorish style architecture.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 20 Visit the ancient Mayan city of Uxmal

This morning we will visit the site at Uxmal. Encircled by hills, Uxmal is expansive in its design with majestic palaces and templepyramids. Long geometrical friezes rank among the most splendid examples of ancient American Art. The incredible Pyramid of the Magician and the beautiful Governor's Palace are two of the finest examples of Mayan art anywhere. Later in the day we return to Merida, where we have time to wander along the narrow streets watching the horse-drawn carriages rattle past. Alternatively there is an option to visit Celestun, the pink flamingo sanctuary.

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

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 21 Tour ends Merida

The tour ends this morning in Merida.

 **Included Meals:** None

## Accommodation and Meals

### Food & Drink

Included meals: 1 breakfast, 0 lunches, 1 dinner 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.

#### Belize

**Lunch £:** 13.00

**Dinner £:** 20.00

#### Guatemala

**Lunch £:** 4.00 - 6.00

**Dinner £:** 8.00 - 10.00

#### Mexico

**Lunch £:** 7.00

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**Dinner £:** 13.00

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## 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.

## Belize

**Bottle of Beer £:** 1.50

**Water £:** 1.00

## Guatemala

**Bottle of Beer £:** 2.00 - 4.00

**Water £:** 1.00 - 2.00

## Mexico

**Bottle of Beer £:** 2.00

**Water £:** 0.70

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## International Departure Taxes

Mexico: there is a 500 Pesos (approx. US\$30) departure tax payable pre entry to Guatemala.

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

MXY only -

Belize: there is a US\$20 departure tax

An extra 500 Pesos will be payable if you extend and stay for more than 7 days in Mexico

## 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.

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## Optional Excursions

Mexico City - Ballet Folklorico - US\$80-120; Coyoacan Frida Kahlo Museum US\$12 (plus transport)

Oaxaca - Regional Museum US\$ 5; Folkloric dancing US\$25

San Cristobal - Na Bolom US\$5 ; Kakaw Museum US\$2 ; Kakaw Chocolate workshop US\$20

Palenque - Misol Ha waterfall US\$2 entry plus transport US\$70 (up to 4)

Flores - Boat trip on Lake Peten Itza US\$ 20; Tikal Canopy - US\$50

San Ignacio - Iguana Farm US\$12; Cahal Pech site US\$15; Xunantunich site US\$30; Yaxha US\$30

Caye Caulker - half day snorkel US\$35; Full day Snorkel US\$65 inc. lunch; Manatee search US\$85 inc. lunch

Valladolid - Swim in a cenote US\$5

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## 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.

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## 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\$ 70 for group tipping if on MXY, 15% is expected in restaurants.

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## Foreign Exchange

### Belize

**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:** We do not recommend Travellers cheques, they are difficult to exchange.

**Local Currency:** Belize Dollar

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Carry all your funds in US cash NOT Sterling. We recommend to take a minimum of US\$500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they might be difficult to exchange. USD are legal currency in Belize and can be used to pay everywhere

**Where to Exchange:** Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

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## 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.

## 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](http://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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Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers [www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore](http://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](http://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](mailto: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, 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. Belize: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens. 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 to 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](http://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

### Belize

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, TB, 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 certificate 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.

### 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.

### 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

#### Belize

Sub-tropical with a brisk prevailing wind from the Caribbean. Summer highs are rarely above 35°C, winter lows rarely below 15°C. Annual rainfall ranges from 107cm in the north to 364cm in the south and humidity can be high at any time of year. The rainy season extends from June through October with a short dry period in August, but some rain can be expected throughout the year.

#### 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.

#### 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

From Nov-Apr warmer clothing is needed in the highlands (San Cristobal and Mexico City), which are mostly mild, but temperatures can drop dramatically at night. Pack a fleece and some long sleeved clothing for protection from sun and insects. Lightweight rainwear is essential. In general, winter is dry and summer wet. Casual clothes are acceptable. Shorts are acceptable everywhere except in churches.

### Equipment

An umbrella is useful for tropical downpours. A torch and waterbottle are recommended. Bring insect repellent, sunscreen and a sunhat.

### Footwear

Bring walking boots if you have them, otherwise comfortable shoes/trainers with a good grip and sandals.

### Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac. Remember - you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself. Please note that in the Yucatan luggage is stored on a roof rack and you must be able to lift it.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

## General Information

### Country details

#### Belize

**Population:** 333,200  
**Size of Country:** 22,966  
**Major Language:** English  
**Religion:** Christian  
**Time Difference to GMT:** -6

#### Guatemala

**Population:** 13,276,517  
**Size of Country:** 108,890 sq km  
**Major Language:** Spanish  
**Religion:** 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

#### Belize

2 Pin Flat

#### Guatemala

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.

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## 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](http://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.

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## 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.

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### 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

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### 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.

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### 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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