

Tikal & Flores, Guatemala

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Best Places to Stay

- » Tikal Inn, Tikal (p235)
- » Gucumatz, Petén Itzá (p242)
- » Gran Hotel de la Isla, Flores (p243)

Best Places to Eat

- » La Villa del Chef, Flores (p247)
- » Sugar Sap, El Remate (p240)
- » Las Orquideas, El Remate (p241)

Why Go?

The glory and splendors of the ancient Maya world await you, just over the border in the lush rainforests of Eastern Guatemala. The region is especially important to the Maya people, being home to many temples, pyramids and ruins with significance to the alignment of 12/21/2012, which completes (or may have already completed) a major cycle of the Maya calendar.

The most fabled (and easiest to reach) of Guatemala's slice of La Ruta Maya is Tikal. Larger and more completely restored than any of the Maya sites in Belize, Tikal offers visitors the unique opportunity to spend the night at the ruins, waking up in the middle of the jungle, thanks to its in-park campground and lodges. Alternatively, the nearby lakeside villages of Flores and El Remate are peaceful, picturesque places to recover from some intensive archaeological exploration.

When to Go

From January to March, few bugs and little rain make for optimum jungle travel conditions. The Unificación Maya Festival takes place at Maya sites throughout the area in December. The months leading up to the winter solstice of 2012 are bound to be intense.

i Getting There & Around

Air

Belizean Carrier **Tropic Air** (📍Belize 226-2012, in USA 800-422-3435; www.tropicair.com; one-way/return BZ\$230/450) has two daily flights between Belize City International and Flores, Guatemala. The flight takes 45 minutes, but leave time for customs and immigration proceedings on both sides.

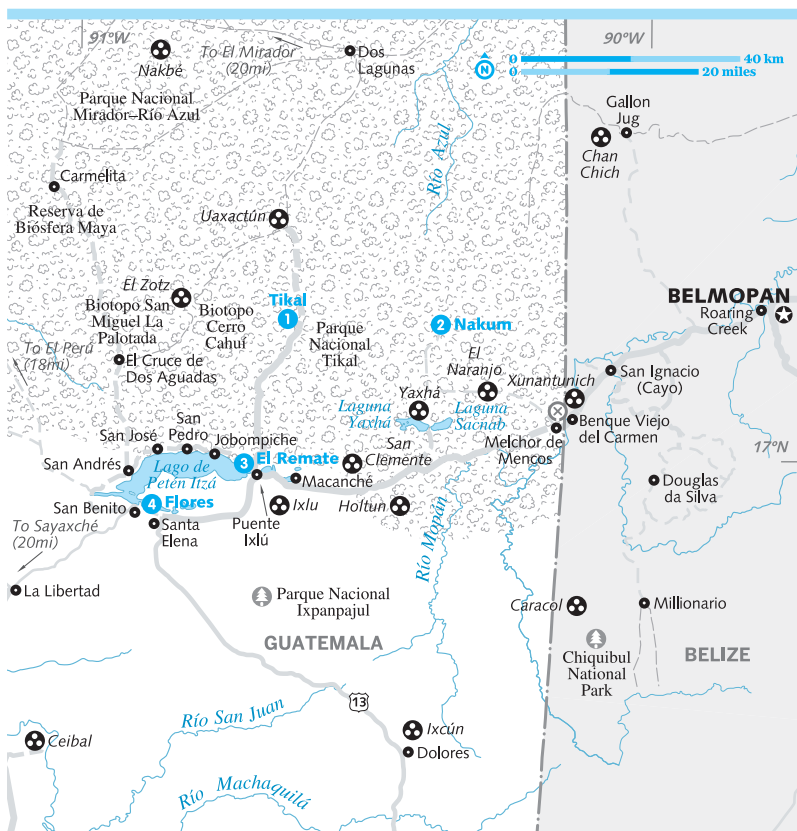
Car

Independent adventurers can take a direct express bus to Flores from Belize City (p65) or San Ignacio (p175). Alternatively, local buses go from these cities to Benque Viejo del Carmen, in

Belize, where you can get a taxi for the 2 miles to the border.

Melchor de Mencos is the village on the Guatemalan side of the border. From here, you can catch a *colectivo* (a shared minibus) to Santa Elena; from there you can hop in a taxi or walk to Flores. The road is now fully paved. If you choose to go to El Remate first, the driver will let you off at the Puente Ixlú (also called El Cruce) junction, from which it's a half-mile walk into town. From El Remate, you can catch a taxi or *colectivo* 22 miles further to Tikal.

Linea Dorada (📍Belize City 223-2225. Flores 5983-1163; www.lineadorada.com.gt) runs daily



Tikal & Flores, Guatemala, Highlights

- 1** Climbing Temple IV for a 360-degree view of the jungle-shrouded ruins in **Tikal** (opposite)
- 2** Camping at night in the ancient, seldom-visited city of **Nakum** (p236)
- 3** Watching the sun set over Lago de Petén Itzá in **El Remate** (p237)
- 4** Wandering the cobblestone streets of **Flores** (p243)