

# Tikal & Flores, Guatemala

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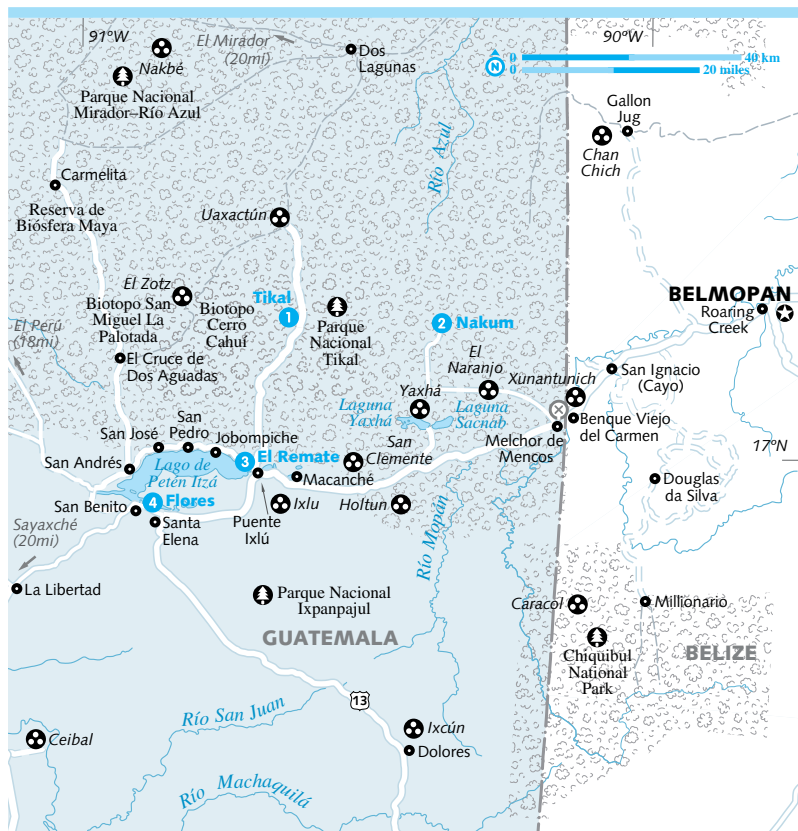
## Why Go?

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 recently completed a major cycle of the Maya calendar and began another.

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

- ➔ **Jan–Mar** Few bugs and little rain make for optimum jungle travel conditions.
- ➔ **Dec** The Unificación Maya Festival takes place at Maya sites throughout the area.



## Tikal & Flores, Guatemala Highlights

- 1 Tikal** (below) Climbing Temple IV for a 360-degree view of the jungle-shrouded ruins.
- 2 Yaxhá** (p240) Camping at night in the ancient, seldom-visited city.
- 3 El Remate** (p241) Watching the sun set over Lago de Petén Itzá.
- 4 Flores** (p243) Wandering the cobblestone streets.

## Tikal

The most striking feature of **Tikal** (📍 2367-2837; [www.parque-tikal.com](http://www.parque-tikal.com); Q150; 🕒 6am-6pm) is its towering, steep-sided temples, rising to heights of more than 144 feet, but what distinguishes it is its jungle setting. Its many plazas have been cleared of trees and vines, its temples uncovered and partially restored, but as you walk from one building to another you pass beneath the dense canopy of rainforest amid the rich, loamy aromas of earth and vegetation. Much of the delight of touring the site comes from

strolling the broad causeways, originally built of packed limestone to accommodate traffic between temple complexes. By stepping softly you're more likely to spot monkeys, agoutis, foxes and ocellated turkeys.

Tikal is a popular day trip from Flores or El Remate, so is much quieter in the late afternoon and early morning, which makes an overnight stay an attractive option.

## i Orientation

The archaeological site is at the center of the 212-sq-mile Parque Nacional Tikal. The road from Flores enters the park 12 miles south of the ruins.