

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATIONS

Guatemalan accommodations range from luxury hotels to budget hotels to ultrabudget guesthouses called *hospedajes*, *casas de huéspedes* or *pensiones*.

This book lists accommodation options in order of price – from cheapest to most expensive. The budget category covers places where a typical double costs Q150 or less. Doubles less than Q80 are generally small, dark and not particularly clean. Security may not be the best in such places. A Q150 double should be clean, sizable and airy, with a bathroom, TV and, in hot parts of the country, a fan.

### BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodations reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels). You'll find the true, insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

Midrange covers establishments with doubles between Q150 and Q400. These rooms are always comfortable: private hot-water bathroom, TV, decent beds, fan and/or aircon are standard. Good midrange hotels have attractive public areas such as dining rooms, bars and swimming pools. In hot regions, the rooms may be attractive wooden bungalows, with thatch roofs, verandas and hammocks; in cooler areas they may be in beautiful old colonial-style houses with antique furnishings and lovely patios.

Anything more expensive than Q400 is top end. Guatemala City's international-class business-oriented hotels, Antigua's very finest hostels, and a few resort hotels elsewhere constitute nearly the whole of the top end options.

Room rates often go up in places popular with tourists during *Semana Santa* (the week leading up to Easter Sunday), Christmas–New Year and July and August. *Semana Santa* is the major Guatemalan holiday period, and prices can rise by anything from 30% to 100% on the coast and in the countryside – anywhere Guatemalans go to relax. At this time advance reservations are a very good idea.

Regardless of your budget, if you're planning on staying for longer than a few days, it's worth asking for a discount.

Be aware that room rates are subject to two large taxes – 12% IVA (value-added tax) and 10% to pay for the activities of the Guatemalan Tourism Institute (Inguat), although there is discussion about eliminating this second tax. All prices in this book include both taxes. Some of the more expensive hotels forget to include them when they quote their prices.

## Camping

In Guatemala, camping can be a hit-or-miss affair, as there are few designated campgrounds and safety is rarely guaranteed. Where campsites are available, expect to pay from Q20 to Q50 per person per night.

## Homestays

Travelers attending Spanish school have the option of living with a Guatemalan family. This is usually a pretty good bargain – expect to pay between Q250 and Q500 a week on top of your tuition for your own room, shared bathrooms, and three meals a day except Sunday. It's important to find a homestay that gels with your goals – some families host several students at a time, creating more of an international hostel atmosphere than a family environment.

## ACTIVITIES

### Climbing, Trekking & Hiking

The many volcanoes are irresistible challenges, and many of them can be done in one day from Antigua (p96) or Quetzaltenango (p157). There's further great hill country in the Ixil Triangle and the Cuchumatanes mountains to the north of Huehuetenango, especially around Todos Santos Cuchumatán (p180) and Nebaj (p153). The Lago de Atitlán (p116) is surrounded by spectacular trails, though robberies here have made some routes inadvisable.

Treks of several days are perfectly feasible, and agencies in Antigua, Quetzaltenango and Nebaj can guide you. In the Petén jungles,

treks to remote archaeological sites (p305) such as El Mirador and El Perú offer an exciting challenge.

### Coffee Tours

With so much great farmland set in lush surroundings, it was only a matter of time before Guatemalan coffee farms started getting some serious tourist attention. Coffee tours are a great way to learn about the history and present-day reality of Guatemalan farm life. See the boxed text on p194 for some farm tours, and also check out the individual listings for Finca los Nietos (p111), Nueva Alianza (p193), Cobán (p216), Finca San Lorenzo (p210) and Finca El Cisne (p251) in Honduras.

### Cycling

There's probably no better way to experience the Guatemalan highlands than by bicycle. Panajachel (p118), San Pedro La Laguna (p133), Quetzaltenango (p157) and Antigua (p97) in particular are the best launch points, with agencies offering trips and equipment.

### Horseback Riding

Opportunities for a gallop, a trot or even a horse trek are on the increase in Guatemala. There are stables in Antigua (p97), Santiago Atitlán (p130), Quetzaltenango (p157), El Remate (p284), Laguna Brava (p184) and San Pedro La Laguna (p133). Unicornio Azul (p179), north of Huehuetenango, offers treks of up to nine days in the Cuchumatanes.

## PRACTICALITIES

- Guatemalans use the metric system for weights and measures, except that they pump gasoline by the *galón* (US gallon) and occasionally weigh things such as laundry and coffee in pounds.
- Videos and DVDs on sale use the NTSC image registration system.
- Electrical current is 115V to 125V, 60Hz, and plugs are two flat prongs, all the same as in the US and Canada.
- The most respected of Guatemala's many newspapers are *La Prensa Libre* ([www.prensalibre.com](http://www.prensalibre.com)), *Siglo Veintiuno* ([www.sigloxxi.com](http://www.sigloxxi.com)), *La Hora* ([www.lahora.com.gt](http://www.lahora.com.gt)) and *El Periódico* ([www.elperiodico.com.gt](http://www.elperiodico.com.gt)). Some of the best investigative journalism in the country can be found in the magazine *Revista ...Y Qué?* ([www.revistayque.com](http://www.revistayque.com)).
- For Guatemala-related articles from around the world and Guatemala in English, check the *Guatemala Times* ([www.guatemala-times.com](http://www.guatemala-times.com)). *The Revue* ([www.revuemag.com](http://www.revuemag.com)) is Guatemala's free, widely distributed, monthly English-language magazine – a lot of ads, a few interesting articles.
- Almost every TV is cable, which ensures reception and brings a number of US stations to hotel TVs.