



Guatemala City

POP 4.1 MILLION / ELEV 1500M

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Kakao (p55)
- ➔ Café-Restaurante Hamburgo (p54)
- ➔ La Maison de France (p55)
- ➔ Café de Imeri (p54)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Otelito (p53)
- ➔ Quetzalroo (p53)
- ➔ Hotel Colonial (p52)
- ➔ Hotel Ajau (p49)
- ➔ Hostal Los Lagos (p53)

Why Go?

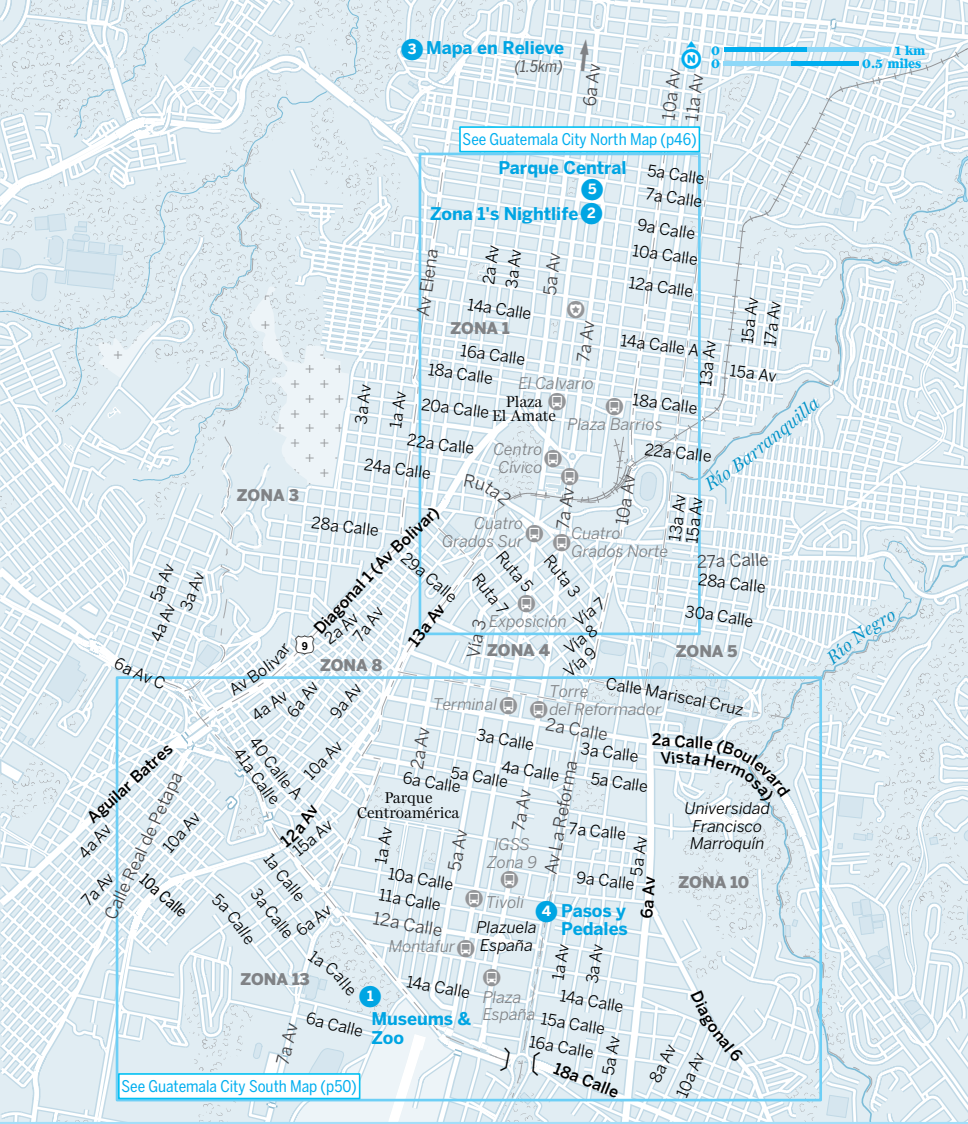
Depending on who you talk to, Guatemala City (or Guate as it's known) is either big, dirty, dangerous and utterly forgettable or big, dirty, dangerous and fascinating. Either way, there's no doubt that there's an energy here unlike that found in the rest of Guatemala. It's a place where dilapidated buses belch fumes next to Beemers and Hummers, and skyscrapers drop shadows on shantytowns.

Guate is busy reinventing itself as a people-friendly city. Downtown Zona 1, for years a no-go zone of abandoned buildings and crime hot spots, is leading the way with the pedestrianized 6a Calle attracting bars, cafes and restaurants.

Many travelers skip the city altogether, preferring to make Antigua their base. Still, you may want, or need, to get acquainted with the capital because this is the hub of the country, home to the best museums and galleries, transport hubs and other traveler's services.

When to Go

Guatemala City's weather patterns follow the rest of the country – particularly noteworthy are the rainy afternoons during the wet season (May to October). As with most urban environments, Guate feels muggier during humid months and colder during cooler times. Surprisingly, the lead-up to Easter is a good time to be in town. You can use the city as a base to visit overcrowded Antigua on day trips, and the capital (particularly Zona 1) also hosts its own religious processions, which may not be as atmospheric as Antigua's but tend to be more grandiose.



Guatemala City Highlights

- 1 Visit the country's best **museums** and **zoo** (p48)
- 2 Check out Zona 1's bustling **nightlife** (p55)
- 3 Gaze at Guatemala from above at the **Mapa en Relieve** (p45)
- 4 Take a stroll along Zona 10's **Pasos y Pedales** (p48)
- 5 Catch a free concert or feed the pigeons in **Parque Central** (p44)