



# El Petén

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Las Orquídeas (p247)
- ➔ Terrazzo (p239)
- ➔ Posada & Restaurante Campamento El Chiclero (p257)
- ➔ Las Mesitas (p238)
- ➔ Finca Ixobel (p232)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Finca Ixobel (p232)
- ➔ Ni'tun Ecolodge (p244)
- ➔ Chiminos Island Lodge (p232)
- ➔ Estación Biológica Las Guacamayas (p260)
- ➔ Alice Guesthouse (p246)

## Why Go?

Vast, sparsely populated and jungle-covered, Guatemala's largest and northernmost department is ripe for exploration. Whether it's the mysteries of the Classic Maya, the bounty of the jungle or the chance to lounge lakeside that inspires you, it's all here in abundance. How deeply you choose to delve into the Maya legacy will depend on your willingness to get your feet muddy. The towering temples of Tikal can be reached by tour from just about anywhere, while more remote sites such as El Mirador and Piedras Negras require days of planning and further days of jungle trekking. The Reserva De Biosfera Maya (Maya Biosphere Reserve) covers virtually the entire northern third of El Petén, and together with its counterparts in Mexico and Belize forms a multinational wildlife haven that spans more than 30,000 sq km.

## When to Go

If you're planning to do much jungle trekking to remote archaeological sites, late February to May are best: it's drier, less boggy and you won't have to wade through so much mud, though it can get rather hot and steamy toward late May. The rains begin in June and with them come the mosquitoes – bring rain gear, repellent and, if you plan on slinging a hammock, a mosquito net. September and October are peak hurricane and thunderstorm season, with the rains continuing into November, and are best avoided. December to February, with cool nights and mornings, can be quite a pleasant time to visit El Petén.

## El Petén Highlights

1 Gazing over the jungle canopy from towering Temple IV at **Tikal** (p247).

2 Trekking through the jungle to the vast, though still scarcely excavated, Maya city of **El Mirador** (p261).

3 Awakening to the sound of howler monkeys at **Laguna Petexbatún** (p231).

4 Night cruising for crocodiles and spotting macaws at the **Estación Biológica Las Guacamayas** (p260).

5 Lounging lakeside over evening cocktails on the picturesque island/town of **Flores** (p234).

6 Admiring the sunset over Lago de Petén Itzá from your private pier in laid-back **El Remate** (p244).

7 Breaking bread with fellow travelers at the rural retreat of **Finca Ixobel** (p232).

8 Rolling down the **Río de la Pasión** to **Ceibal** (p230), a remote riverside ruin with intricately carved stelae of past Maya rulers.

