



The Pacific Slope

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Taberna El Pelicano (p174)
- ➔ Cafetería La Luna (p163)
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- ➔ Robert's (p169)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Takalik Maya Lodge (p164)
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Why Go?

Separated from the highlands by a chain of volcanoes, the flatlands that run down to the Pacific are universally known as La Costa. It's a sultry region – hot and wet or hot and dry, depending on the time of year – with rich volcanic soil good for growing coffee, palm-oil seeds and sugarcane.

Archaeologically, the big draws here are Takalik Abaj and the sculptures left by pre-Olmec civilizations around Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa.

The culture is overwhelmingly *ladino* (mixed indigenous and European heritage), and even the biggest towns are humble affairs, with low-rise houses and the occasional palm-thatched roof.

Guatemalan beach tourism is seriously underdeveloped. Monterrico is the only real contender, helped along by a nature reserve protecting mangroves and their inhabitants. Sipacate is slowly developing as a surf resort, although serious surfers find more joy in Mexico or El Salvador.

When to Go

You can't escape the heat on the coast, although temperatures do get a little more moderate from November to March. Beaches pack out on weekends and places like Monterrico will often double their room rates. Guatemalans love the beach for the main vacation periods – Easter and Christmas – and booking accommodations around this time is a very good idea.

The Pacific surf is rough at any time of year, but surfers find the best waves towards the end of hurricane season, late October through to November.



The Pacific Slope Highlights

1 Tilapita (p160) Getting away from absolutely everything in this one-hotel town.

2 Parque Arqueológico Takalik Abaj (p164) Investigating the bridge in history between the Olmec and the Maya while strolling this grassy archaeological site.

3 Biotopo Monterrico-Hawaii (p172) Spotting wildlife among the mangrove-lined canal and lagoons.