



Guatemala

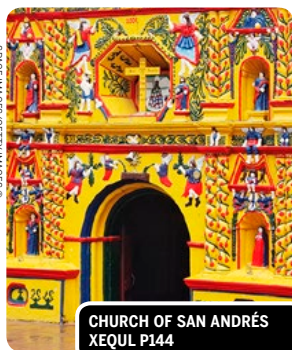


THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Lucas Vidgen, Daniel C Schechter

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to Guatemala...	4
Guatemala Map	6
Guatemala's Top 15	8
Need to Know	16
First Time Guatemala ...	18
If You Like.....	20
Month by Month.....	22
Itineraries	24
Guatemala's Ancient Ruins	32
Regions at a Glance....	38



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BUS, PANAJACHEL P93

ON THE ROAD

GUATEMALA

CITY	42
Sights.....	44
Activities	49
Tours.....	49
Sleeping.....	52
Eating	54
Drinking & Nightlife.....	57
Entertainment.....	57
Shopping	58

ANTIGUA

Sights.....	65
Activities.....	70
Courses.....	72
Tours.....	75
Festivals & Events.....	75
Sleeping.....	75
Eating.....	79
Drinking & Nightlife.....	82
Entertainment.....	83
Shopping.....	83
Around Antigua.....	86
Jocotenango.....	86
El Hato.....	86
Ciudad Vieja & Around.....	87
San Cristóbal El Alto.....	88
San Juan Comalapa.....	88
Santiago Sacatepéquez & Sumpango.....	89

THE HIGHLANDS ...

Lago de Atitlán	92
Sololá	93
Panajachel	93
Santiago Atitlán	105
San Pedro La Laguna . . .	108
San Juan La Laguna . . .	112
San Marcos La Laguna	114
Jaibalito	115

Santa Cruz La Laguna...	116
Tzununá	117
Quiché	117
Chichicastenango	118
Santa Cruz del Quiché ...	122
Uspantán	124
Nebaj	125
Chajul	129
Acul	129
Western Highlands....	130
Quetzaltenango	130
Around Quetzaltenango	142
Huehuetenango	147
Around Huehuetenango	151

THE PACIFIC

SLOPE	157
Tilapita.....	160
Coatepeque.....	161
Retalhuleu	161
Champerico.....	165
Tulate	165
Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa	166
La Democracia	169
Sipacate.....	170
Escuintla	170
Autosafari Chapín	171
Iztapa	171
Monterrico.....	171
Cuilapa.....	176
Lago de Amatitlán	176

CENTRAL & EASTERN

GUATEMALA	177
Alta & Baja Verapaz ...	180
Salamá & Around.....	180
Salto de Chalisco.....	180
Biotopo del Quetzal.....	181

Contents

UNDERSTAND



Guatemala Today	264
History	266
Guatemalan Way of Life.....	275
Maya Heritage.....	280
Arts & Architecture ...	284
Landscapes & Wildlife	288

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Directory A–Z	294
Transportation	303
Language	307
Index.....	316
Map Legend.....	323

Cobán.....	182	Flores & Santa Elena... ..	234
San Cristóbal Verapaz... ..	186	El Remate	244
San Pedro Carchá	186	Tikal	247
Grutas Rey Marcos	186	Uaxactún	254
Lanquín	187	Yaxhá	257
Semuc Champey & Around	189	Nakum	259
Chisec & Around	189	Parque Nacional Laguna del Tigre.....	260
Raxruhá	190	El Mirador	261
El Oriente.....	192		
Río Hondo	193		
Chiquimula	194		
Ipala	196		
Quetzaltepeque	196		
Esquipulas.....	197		
Quiriguá.....	200		
Copán (Honduras)	201		
Copán Site.....	201		
Copán Ruinas	206		
Caribbean Coast.....	211		
Lago de Izabal.....	211		
Puerto Barrios	216		
Punta de Manabique....	218		
Livingston	218		
EL PETÉN.....	225		
Sayaxché	229		
Finca Ixobel.....	232		

SPECIAL FEATURES

Itineraries	24
Off the Beaten Track... ..	30
Guatemala's Ancient Ruins	32
Tikal 3D Illustration	248



Plan Your Trip

Itineraries



Hit the Highlights

On a short break and want to see it all? Well, that's not going to happen, but with a week you can at least see Guatemala's Big Three.

Flying into **Guatemala City**, shuttle or taxi directly to **Antigua**. If you don't arrive too late, grab dinner at one of the city's fabulous restaurants and maybe a nightcap in a cozy bar. Next morning, take a walk around town – don't miss the Iglesia de la Merced or Las Capuchinas convent. You'll probably want an early night because the next day you'll be climbing a volcano – check with the

locals to see which one is safe/recommended to climb at the moment. Back in town, catch dinner at the wonderfully atmospheric Mesón Panza Verde. The next day it's on to **Lago de Atitlán**. **Panajachel** is great for shopping and eating, but read up on the other villages around the lake – each is different and has its own appeal. Regardless of where you end up, spend a half a day exploring 'your' village and the next day exploring the rest of the lake. Next it's off to **Tikal**, so shuttle back to Guatemala City and then on to **Flores**. Head straight for the site, spend the day exploring and then return to Guatemala City for your flight home.

ROBERTO A. SANCHEZ / GETTY IMAGES ©



Above: Arco de Santa
Catalina (p84), Antigua

Right: Handicrafts,
Panajachel (p93)

DAN HERRICK / GETTY IMAGES ©





10
DAYS

Highland Fling

Guatemala's most spectacular scenery and strongest Maya traditions await along this well-traveled route. It could easily take a few months if you stop off to learn some Spanish or to take advantage of the great sightseeing and hiking possibilities along the way.

From the **capital** head first to picturesque **Antigua**, enjoying the country's finest colonial architecture, the great restaurants and the traveler and language-student scene. Several volcanoes wait to be climbed here including the fiery Volcán Fuego – but ask around for current conditions before planning anything.

From Antigua move on to **Panajachel** on volcano-ringed **Lago de Atitlán**. Hop in a boat to check out some of the quieter, more traditional Maya villages around the lake such as Santiago Atitlán, where the curious deity Maximón awaits, or San Pedro La Laguna, a party town with a certain fame countrywide. San Marcos La Laguna is much more laid-back and a magnet for yoga and natural-healing types. Santa Cruz La Laguna, meanwhile, is just plain tiny and gorgeous.

From the lake, hop a shuttle or 'chicken bus' north to **Chichicastenango** for its huge Thursday or Sunday market and, if you're lucky, a religious ceremony where it's hard to tell where the Maya-ism ends and the Catholicism starts.

From Chichicastenango you can follow the Interamericana Hwy west along the mountain ridges to **Quetzaltenango**, Guatemala's clean, orderly second city, with a host of intriguing villages, markets and natural wonders waiting within short bus rides away. From Quetzaltenango it's possible to go further into the hills to **Todos Santos Cuchumatán**, a fascinating Maya mountain town with great walking possibilities.

If you have extra time, consider pushing east to explore **Nebaj** and the Ixil Triangle, where you'll find great hiking opportunities and a strong Maya way of life amid stunning scenery. A rough but passable road leads further eastward from here, passing **Uspantán** and providing a back-door route to Alta Verapaz, where you can check out **Cobán**, **Semuc Champey** or head further north toward **Tikal**.



CULTURA TRAVEL / BEN PIFE PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES ©



JON ANOLD IMAGES / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top: Lago de Atitlán (p92)
Bottom: Young girl in Santiago Atitlán (p105)



The Big Loop

This 1900km round trip takes you to the best of Guatemala's Maya ruins, into its dense jungles and to some of its spectacular natural marvels, covering the center, east and north of the country. Really pushing, you might do it in two weeks, but if you have four, you'll enjoy it more.

Start out northeastward from **Guatemala City** and detour south into Honduras to see the great Maya site of **Copán**. Don't just make it a flying visit, though – Copán is a great town and there's plenty to do in the surrounding countryside.

Return to Guatemala and continue northeastward to another fine Maya site, **Quiriguá**, where you can marvel at the 10m-plus carved stelae and you may just have the place to yourself.

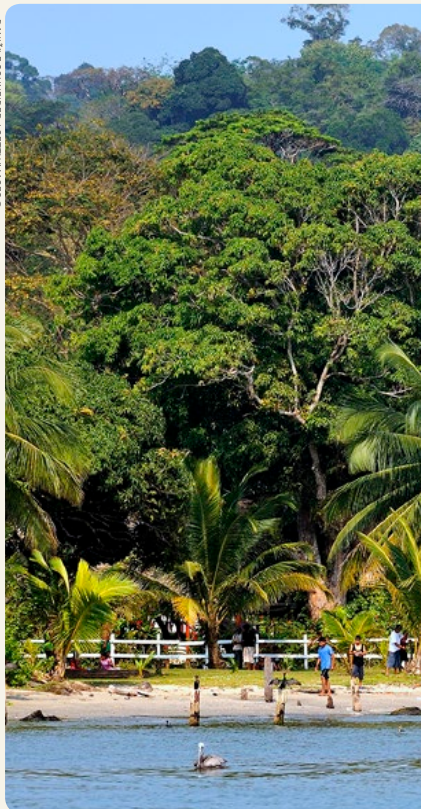
From there move on to the curious Garifuna enclave of **Livingston** on the sweaty Caribbean coast. Soak up the atmosphere in this entirely different corner of Guatemala and get in some beach time on the country's finest beaches.

Take a boat up the jungle-lined **Río Dulce**, stopping for a dip in the hot springs along the way before reaching **Río Dulce town**.

Head north up Hwy 13 to chill out at **Finca Ixobel** before continuing to **Flores**, a quaint small town on an island in the Lago de Petén Itzá. From Flores, head for **Tikal**, the most majestic of all Maya sites. Spend a night at Tikal itself or nearby **El Remate**. While in the Flores/Tikal area, you should have time to take in further impressive Maya sites such as **Yaxhá** and **Uaxactún**.

From Flores head southwest to the relaxed riverside town of **Sayaxché**, which is at the center of another group of intriguing Mayan sites – **Ceibal**, **Aguateca** and **Dos Pilas**. The road south from Sayaxché is now paved all the way to **Chisee** and **Cobán**, jumping-off points for a whole series of pristine natural wonders, such as jungle-ringed **Laguna Lachuá**, the **Grutas de Lanquín** and the turquoise lagoons and waterfalls of **Semuc Champey**. Finally, make your way back to Guatemala City for your flight home.

DANIEL SCHNEIDER / GETTY IMAGES ©



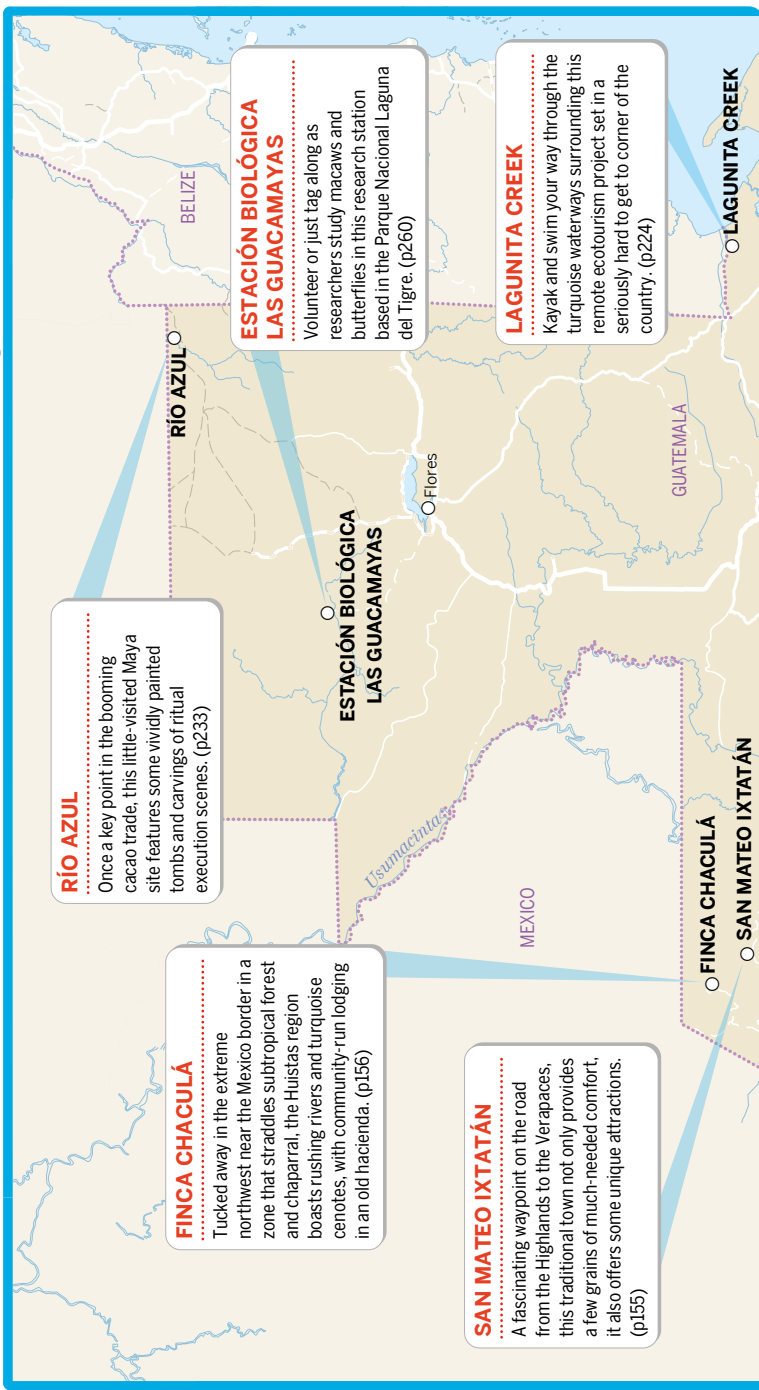
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Top: Fishers, Livingston (p218)
Bottom: Ruins in Tikal (p247)



Guatemala: Off the Beaten Track

**RÍO AZUL**

Once a key point in the booming cacao trade, this little-visited Maya site features some vividly painted tombs and carvings of ritual execution scenes. (p233)

FINCA CHACULÁ

Tucked away in the extreme northwest near the Mexico border in a zone that straddles subtropical forest and chaparral, the Huistas region boasts rushing rivers and turquoise cenotes, with community-run lodging in an old hacienda. (p156)

ESTACIÓN BIOLÓGICA LAS GUACAMAYAS

Volunteer or just tag along as researchers study macaws and butterflies in this research station based in the Parque Nacional Laguna del Tigre. (p260)

ESTACIÓN BIOLÓGICA LAS GUACAMAYAS**LAGUNITA CREEK**

Kayak and swim your way through the turquoise waterways surrounding this remote ecotourism project set in a seriously hard to get to corner of the country. (p224)

FINCA CHACULÁ

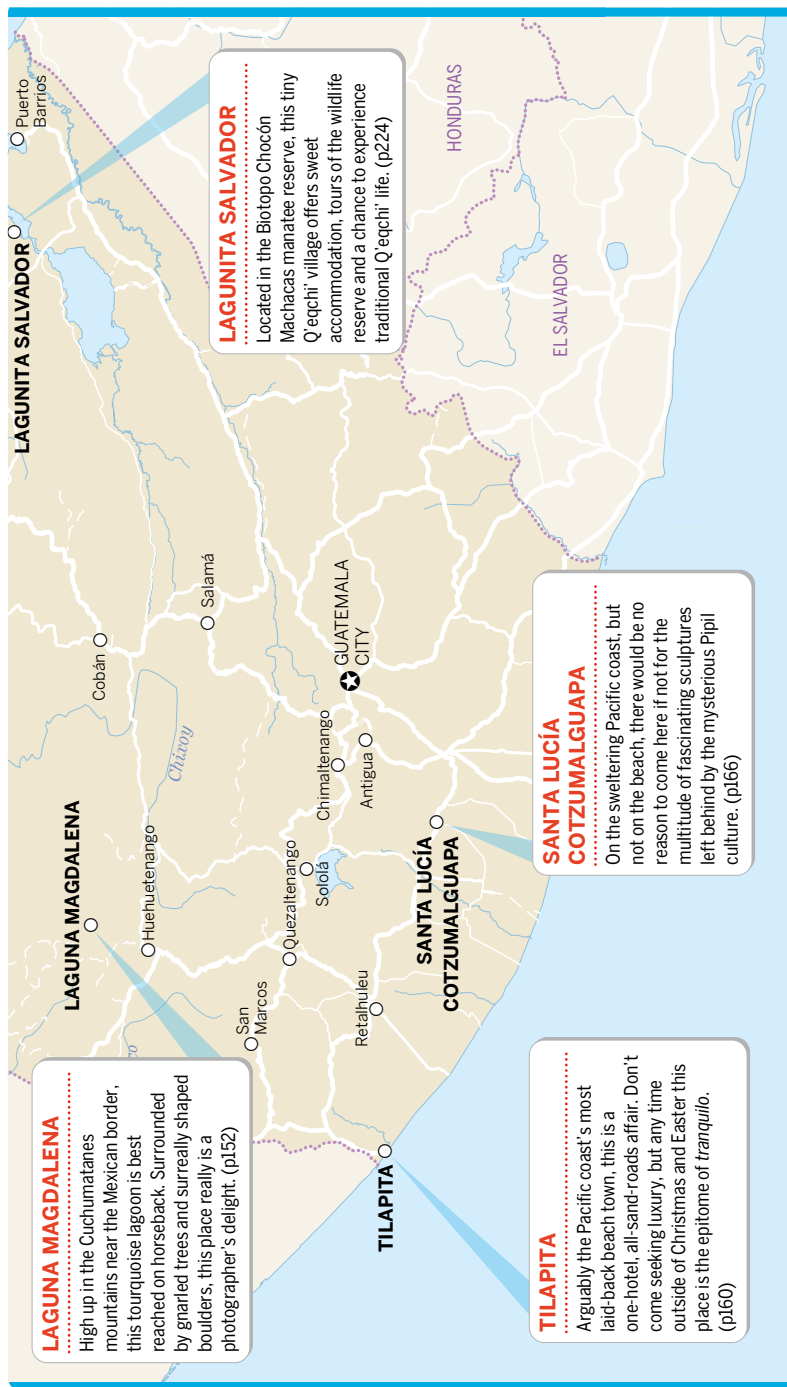
○ SAN MATEO IXTATÁN

LAGUNITA CREEK

○

SAN MATEO IXTATÁN

A fascinating waypoint on the road from the Highlands to the Verapaces, this traditional town not only provides a few grains of much-needed comfort, it also offers some unique attractions. (p155)



Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkeling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway/Subte station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Dublin, Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Lucas Vidgen

Guatemala City, The Pacific Slope, Central & Eastern Guatemala Born and raised in Melbourne, Australia, Lucas has been traveling and working in Latin America for nearly 20 years. He ended up living in Quetzaltenango for over a decade, having gone there for a few weeks to study Spanish. He currently divides his time between Melbourne and Quetzaltenango where he publishes – and very occasionally contributes to – the city's leading nightlife and culture magazine, *XelaWho*. Lucas has contributed to a range of Lonely Planet titles over the years, mostly on Central and South America. His Spanish is OK but he still can't decide if a *pupusa* is better than a potato cake. Lucas also wrote the Plan Your Trip, Understand Guatemala and Survival Guide sections.



Daniel C Schechter

Antigua, The Highlands, El Petén A native New Yorker, Daniel has been poking around Latin America for so long it sometimes makes more sense to him than his place of birth. After living in Colombia and Puerto Rico, he called Mexico home for over a decade. During that time he spanned the Mundo Maya on various forays, discovering and writing about such places as Campeche, Calakmul and Tikal, and cultivating an enduring interest in Classic Maya history. Daniel currently lives in the Netherlands, where he blogs on cycling (<http://netherlandsbikeways.blogspot.nl>).

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