



Guatemala



Paul Clammer, Ray Bartlett

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Itineraries



Greatest Hits

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 – Antigua, Lago de Atitlán and Tikal.

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 many fabulous restaurants and maybe a nightcap in a cozy bar. The next morning, take a walk around town – cut corners if you like, but don't miss the **Arco de Santa Catalina** and **Iglesia Merced**. 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 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.



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 Interamerican 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 Uspantan and providing a back-door route to Alta Verapaz, where you can check out the divine waters of **Semuc Champey** or head further north toward the famous Maya ruins of **Tikal**.



Guatemala Circuit

With two weeks to play with you can work your way around the best that Guatemala has to offer without breaking too much of a sweat – unless you count the jungle heat of Tikal, of course.

After taking in the museums and restaurants of **Guatemala City**, head northeast to the hot and sticky Caribbean coast and the beaches and Garifuna culture of **Livingston**. From here you can take the spectacular boat trip upriver to **Río Dulce** and its hot springs.

From Río Dulce town, head north to traveler-friendly **Flores** on Lago de Petén Itzá. You'll use this town as your base to visit the extraordinary ruins at **Tikal**, where you can spend as much time spotting monkeys as Maya ruins.

When you've had your fill of ancient culture, travel south to **Cobán**, the springboard to the gorgeous jungle waterfalls and swimming holes of **Semuc Champey**. It's one of the prettiest corners of the entire country.

Bypass the capital on the second half of your trip to take stock in the old colonial capital of **Antigua**, with its beautiful buildings, great food and lively traveler scene. It's a short hop from here to **Chichicastenango**: time your visit to take in the twice-weekly market, which is one of the largest and most colorful in Central America.

Continue to volcano-fringed **Lago de Atitlán**, where you have a wide choice of lake-side towns and villages to stay in according to your taste. You might choose busy **Panajachel**, the yoga-chilling **San Marcos La Laguna**, backpacker party hub **San Pedro La Laguna** or ecofriendly **Tzununá**. As ferries zip constantly between them, there's time to visit more than one, and still squeeze in a quick volcano hike.

Finish your adventure with a dash down the Pacific coast to the up-and-coming town of **El Paredón**, where you can grab a surf board, do a wildlife tour of the mangroves or simply laze in a hammock. When you're done, pack up your souvenirs and take a shuttle back to Guatemala City for your flight home.



STYLAN B. SHUTTERSTOCK ©



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Top: Traditional festival,
Chichicastenango
(p122)

Bottom: Playa Blanca
(p217), Livingston

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WEEKS

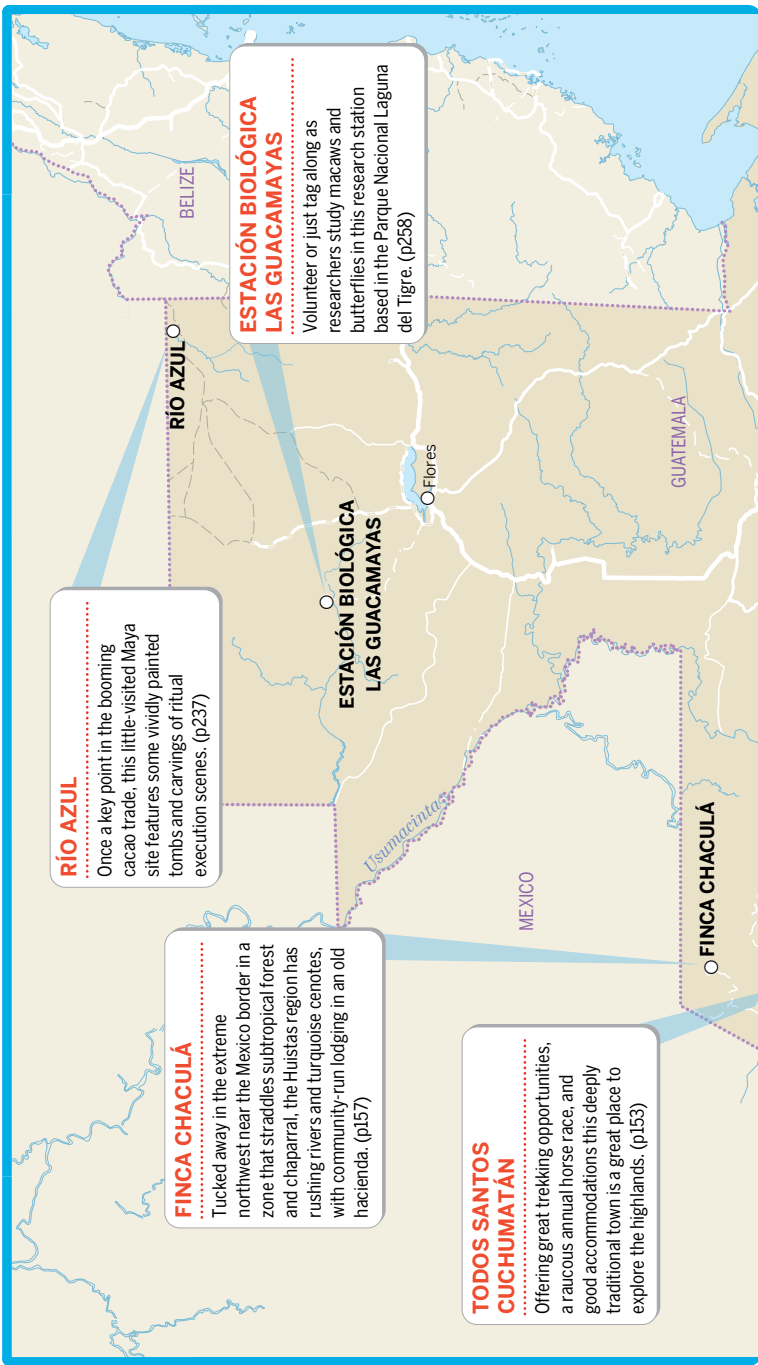
The Maya Loop

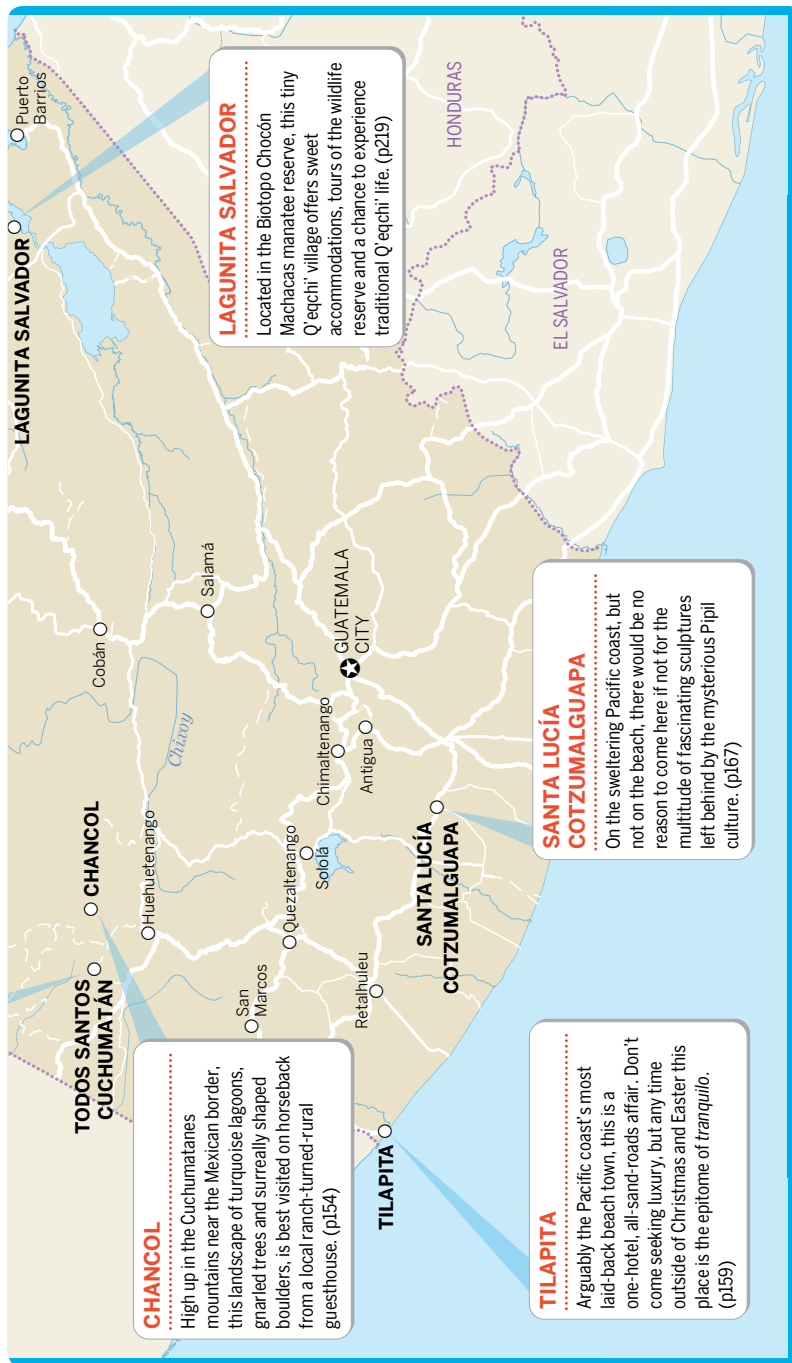
This 1900km round trip takes you to the best of Guatemala's Maya ruins, into its dense jungles and to some of its spectacular natural marvels, covering the center, east and north of the country. Really pushing, you might do it in two weeks; if you have four, you'll enjoy it even more.

Start out northeastward from **Guatemala City**, where you can enjoy great food, nightlife and culture and then 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 here 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 Maya sites – **Ceibal**, **Aguateca** and **Dos Pilas**. The road south from Sayaxché is now paved all the way to **Chisec** 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.

Guatemala: Off the Beaten Track





Behind the Scenes

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OUR READERS

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THIS BOOK

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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
- Hut/Shelter

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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, 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'.

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