

Guatemala

Heart of the Mayan World





GUATEMALA

Guatemala may be a small country but it truly has a world to offer: Due to its natural diversity, it is unique as a travel destination and its cultural treasures are unmatched in the world. Myriads of archeological mysteries of the Mayan civilisation are waiting to be discovered, as well as monuments from times of colonial splendour that are unrivalled in artistic quality.

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES ON THE PLANET

Guatemala is located at the center of the Americas, it is the Heart of the Mayan World and is known to be the land of ever spring due to its consistently mild climate all-year round. It's advantageous climate is also the reason why Guatemala has joined the exclusive club of those 19 "Megadiversity Countries" that are home to over 70% of all known species on earth.

The distances are short in Guatemala, which makes it very easy to visit different regions of the country even on a tight time schedule. Guatemala is rich in natural and cultural treasures and its visitors will find vivid, magical, mystical and colorful traditions throughout the country.

The country's traceable history dates back 4,000 years. It is from that time that we have the first known relics of the high culture of the Mayan civilisation. Today, Guatemala excels at combining past and present: the voyage of discovery begins with the arrival at one of the two international airports, Aurora and Mundo Maya.

The most striking first impression for every visitor is the heartfelt warmth and hospitality of the Guatemalan people. After the warm welcome, nobody can escape the amazement over the majestic volcanoes, lakes, rivers and forests with their breathtaking flora and fauna. The magic of the Mayan World seems to be unbroken in more than 3000 ancient sites, most of all the archaeological jewels Tikal, Yaxhá, Aguateca, Mirador, Quiriguá and Q'uma'rkaj.

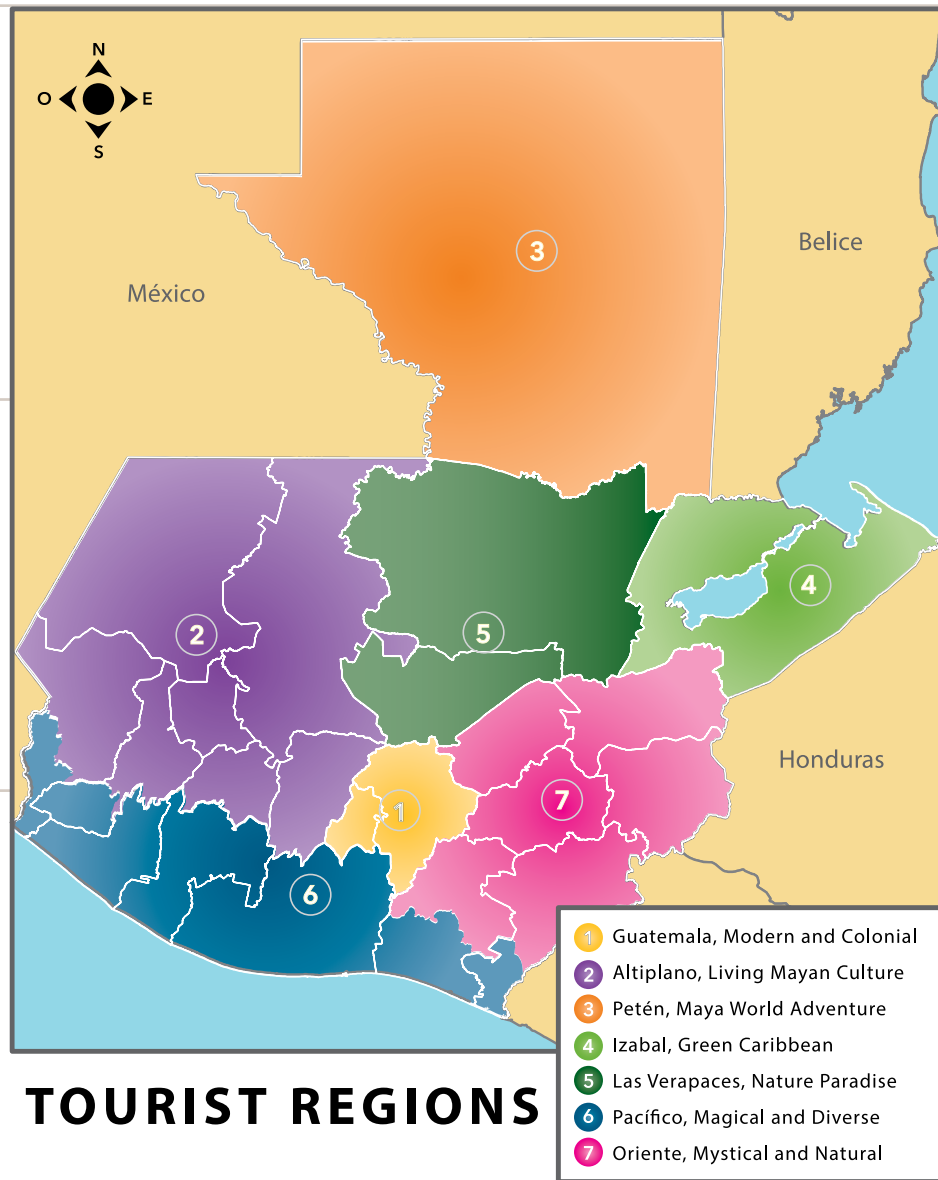
Guatemala's wealth and diversity make it easy for any traveler to enjoy the stay - regardless if for leisure or business. Each region is a world of its own and worth a visit: **Guatemala** - Modern and Colonial, **Altiplano** - Living Mayan Culture, **Petén** - Maya World Adventure, **Izabal** - Green Caribbean, **Las Verapaces** - Nature Paradise, **Pacífico** - Magical and Diverse, **Oriente** - Mystical and Natural.

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contents



Introduction

3



Izabal

25



Guatemala

6



Las Verapaces

28



Altiplano

14



Pacífico

30



Petén

20



Oriente

32

A Fascinating Destination

Modern and Colonial

Living Mayan Culture

Maya World Adventure

Green Caribbean

Nature Paradise

Magical and Diverse

Mystical and Natural



Central Park



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Modern and Colonial

The Metropolitan Cathedral

The country's main entrance is the international airport La Aurora in the capital Guatemala City, also known by its official name "Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción." It is from here that all adventures begin, upon which all visitors are welcomed by the Guatemalans with great kindness and discreet hospitality.

Guatemala City, one of the most modern and international metropolises in Central America, preserves its roots while modernity merges with colonial legacy. A city in constant change, offering chic shopping centers, hospitals and state-of-the-art aesthetics centers, as well as world class venues for exhibitions, conferences and meetings, theme parks and golf courses. Change is omnipresent and becomes most visible in the city center where its

historical buildings, churches, museums, monuments and art galleries seem to defy the centuries.

25 ZONES

The capital is divided into 25 districts ("zonas") connected by the major roads such as Los Próceres, Vista Hermosa, Avenida de las Américas and the Avenida Reforma. The latter is part of the country's National Cultural Heritage and divides zones 9 and 10 where the rapid economic progress in the form of glittering high-rise facades is most visible.

Zone 1 constitutes the historically significant city center. Around it, the city's other districts spread out counter-clockwise:

The "Historical Centre" includes Zones 1 and 2 and is home to many 2 and 3-star hotels as well as hostels



Night view of Guatemala City



Arts and crafts market



Cayalá

for those visitors who prefer to be in touch with every-day Guatemalan city life and want decent value for money on a smaller budget. Here you will find an abundance of local shops in carefully renovated colonial houses that make a protected historical city quarter.

The capital is home to other significant historical buildings, such as the "Ermita del Carmen," the oldest church in the city dating back to 1620, as well as the "Catedral Metropolitana," a splendid colonial building and a national monument since 1968. Other architectural highlights are the "Portal del Comercio," the churches "Iglesia de la Merced," the "Iglesia Santo Domingo," dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary, the "Iglesia del Calvario" and the "Iglesia San Francisco," a well-balanced mix of classicism and

baroque. The "Centro Municipal de Arte y Cultura," is the national temple for the fine arts. It is housed in the former Post and Telegraph offices, two neocolonial twin buildings that are connected by an arch. The Numismatic Museum offers an impressive collection of coins and banknotes as well as significant artifacts from the precolonial period. Also to be found are instruments for coinage, medals and sculptures. The National Library is an eye-catcher not only because of its stringently designed modern façade, but also because of the prominent relief of Efraín Recinos. Inside, there are wall paintings depicting the Mayan codices by Antonio Tejada Fonseca, Guillermo Grajeda Mena and José Antonio Oliverio. The relief map of Claudio Urrutia and Francisco Vela from 1905 shows the topographical state territory in remarkable quality.

The "Centro Cívico," located in zones 1 and 4, is the administrative heart of the city where government and other public institutions are located, amongst which the Guatemala City Administration, the National Mortgage Bank, the Treasury, the Justice Palace and the Central Bank. The latter is famous for its iconographic architecture by Jorge Montes and Carlos Haeussier from the 1960ies. The façade frescoes were conceived by Dagoberto Vasquez Castañeda and Roberto Gonzalez Goyri.

Constitution Square or "Plaza Mayor" has seen all political upheavals in the nation's late history. Here, the *chapines* (the local name for the capital's inhabitants) blend with the countless tourists as street vendors vie with artisans for the attention of the passers-by.

The Railway Museum is surely also worth a visit. It documents the importance of the railroad system for the country's economic development. Anyone interested in painting, sculpture and architecture should book a guided tour of the "Centro Cultural Miguel Ángel." The building itself is considered an icon of modern architecture and serves as a backdrop for the adjacent open-air theater. On the

inside, in addition to the mentioned art collections, there is the large concert hall, the National Theater and the Chamber Theatre.

A wide variety of cultural and culinary delights awaits the visitor in the "Cuatro Grados Norte" zone 4, where several theaters and cultural centers such as the IGA, the "Casa del Aguila" and the Artemis Edinter have opened their doors. On the pedestrianised cobblestone streets, everyone will find the right restaurant after a leisurely stroll.

Zone 7 is home to the archaeological site Kaminaljuyú, which was built during the pre-classical and early classical periods of the Mayan civilization.

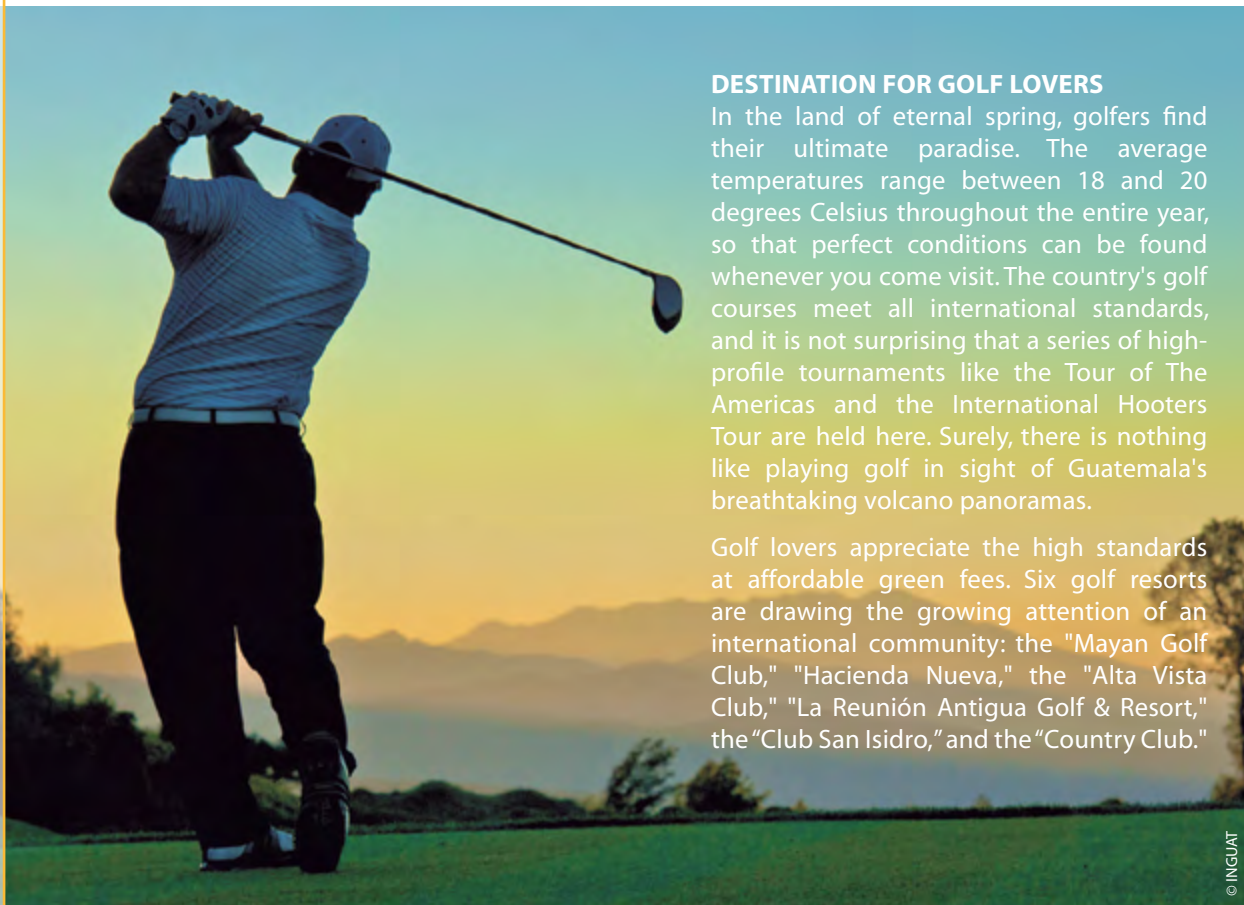
The city never sleeps in the "Zona Viva," the common name for zone 10. Here, local and foreign night owls flock to the numerous restaurants, bars, nightclubs and hotels. Several art galleries as well as the Museum Popol Vuh with one of the most important collections of ancient Mayan art also have their place here.

The "Financial District" of Guatemala City is spread over zones 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15, where most residents of the capital city also

DESTINATION FOR GOLF LOVERS

In the land of eternal spring, golfers find their ultimate paradise. The average temperatures range between 18 and 20 degrees Celsius throughout the entire year, so that perfect conditions can be found whenever you come visit. The country's golf courses meet all international standards, and it is not surprising that a series of high-profile tournaments like the Tour of The Americas and the International Hooters Tour are held here. Surely, there is nothing like playing golf in sight of Guatemala's breathtaking volcano panoramas.

Golf lovers appreciate the high standards at affordable green fees. Six golf resorts are drawing the growing attention of an international community: the "Mayan Golf Club," "Hacienda Nueva," the "Alta Vista Club," "La Reunión Antigua Golf & Resort," the "Club San Isidro," and the "Country Club."



Golf course "La Reunión", La Antigua Guatemala



National Palace

have their workplace. Numerous embassies are also located here.

In Zone 12 lies the "Parque Mundo Petapa," an amusement park with attractions for the whole family.

Zone 13 is home to the "Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno Carlos Mérida," the neo-colonial National Museum of fine arts from the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as the Archaeological Museum, which offers fascinating insights into the Mayan civilization. The urban zoo "La Aurora" is also in this zone and awaits its visitors with carefully designed habitats for a variety of native and foreign animals.

SHOPPING

The wide range of activities in Guatemala's capital is complemented by a large array of excellent shopping centers such as La Pradera, Los Próceres, Unicentro, Tikal Futura, Miraflores, Pradera Concepción, Oakland Mall and Paseo Cayalá.

For all shopping aficionados, the commercial complex "Las Majadas" in zones 7 and 11 is the place to look out for. In this extensive area, 15 shopping centers and supermarkets as well as a number of five-star hotels are setting new standards for all the shopper's heart desires.

The Central Market is an absolute must when it comes to catching local authenticity. The market displays a colorful variety of clothes, shoes, handbags, leather goods, handicrafts or jewelry from local production, many items are hand-made. Numerous food stalls and colorful fruit stands add a fresh taste to the imagery, while the tropical plants and bouquets of the flower stands seduce the olfactory senses.

Another stop to schedule in is the craft market "La Aurora," reminiscent of its proximity to the airport. This is the place for high-quality souvenirs, be it textiles and clothing, works of art and handicrafts as well as fine jewelry, wooden toys and ceramics. This market sells items and merchandise coming from all parts of Guatemala.



CXIX. meeting of the IOC

MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions)

The Guatemalan Institute of Tourism INGUAT and the entire tourism industry are making great efforts to expand the business tourism sector.

The country is in the process of positioning itself as a top destination for events. Renowned event managers are engaged and the most spectacular venues in the Heart of the Mayan World are getting developed with a high degree of professionalism and originality. The Guatemala Conventions Bureau is successfully planning events of all sizes and has the necessary financial and human resources to reach the ambitious self-set goals.

Guatemala already has the necessary infrastructure: a tight network of national and international flight connections, large hotel capacity, a diverse and high-class gastronomic landscape, an extensive range of venues, theaters and unique locations, service providers specializing in the business tourism sector as well as an inexhaustible offer of entertainment possibilities.

It is not surprising that the country of eternal spring has held renowned international events such as the General Assembly of the Governors of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the CXIX. Meeting of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) or the III World Conference of the International Coffee Organization (ICO).



A "Barrilete"



Near the nation's capital lies Antigua Guatemala. It was the capital of the Guatemalan kingdom from 1541 to 1776 until its destruction by the earthquake of Santa Marta. It seems like time stands still in La Antigua: The largely unchanged colonial cityscape with its beautiful old facades exerts an unescapable charm.

UNESCO-World Heritage
Site since 1979.



Antigua Guatemala

Part from the splendour of past days, a breeze of artistic freedom blows through the ancient capital at the foot of the three volcanoes that rarely escape the eye of the beholder: the "Volcán de Agua" or Hunahpú (3760 MASL meters above sea level) and the "Volcán Acatenango" with its two peaks "Pico Mayor" and "Yepopaca" (3880 m). The latter forms a unit with the "Volcán de Fuego" or "Chi Gag," as it is called in the indigenous Caqchikel language, standing at 3763 m it is one of Central America's most impressive volcanoes.

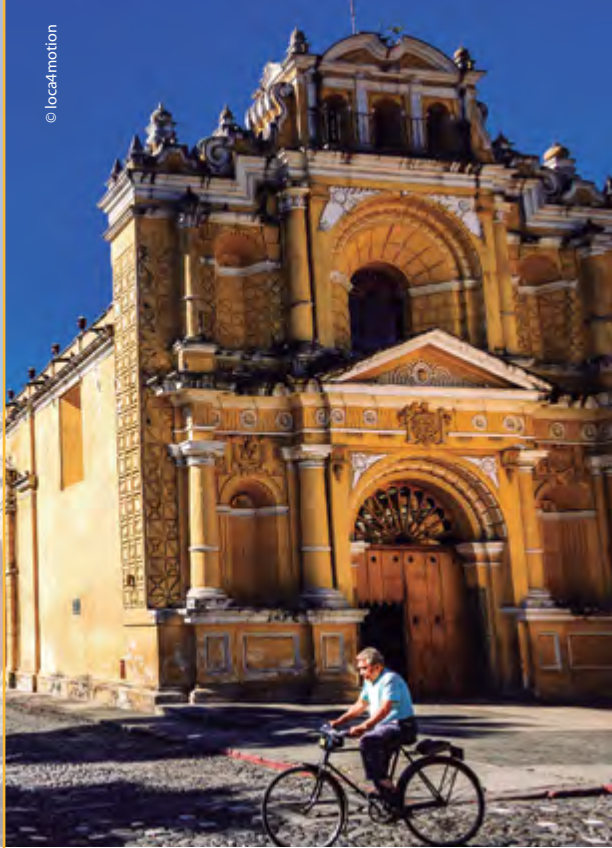
AN OPEN AIR MUSEUM

La Antigua Guatemala preserves a centuries-old history in numerous churches, museums and ruins, which are to be explored along the cobble streets while walking through the city. The ancient legends and traditions are alive in all corners. Among the numerous museums that can be admired are the Ancient Book Museum (where the first ever printed book in Guatemala is exhibited), the Museum of Colonial Art with displays of paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries, the Capuchin Museum with works of colonial and modern art as well as archaeological artefacts, and not least the Archaeological Museum "Casa Santo Domingo."

For the curious, La Antigua offers many shops and markets, where a sheer endless number of country-style textiles, ceramics, as well as high-quality silver and gold works, locally produced leather goods or precious mineral and jade jewelry are waiting to be discovered.

Among the numerous churches, the pilgrimage church of the Apostle Philip, the Temple of Saint Bartolomé Becerra, the Church and Monastery of Our Lady of La Merced, Santa Clara Monastery, the Church and Convent of the Reconciliation, the Church of the Apostle St. Peter and the Monastery of the Society of Jesus stand out and are worth a visit. These sacred places add a romantic touch to the city and make it a favored setting for weddings and events.

On the axis between the impressive "Plaza Central" and the "Palacio del Noble Ayuntamiento" (an original building dating from 1743 with a two-storey colonnade facade of solid stone), the "Palacio de los Capitanes Generales" deserves special attention. The square with the Sirens Fountain from 1737 and the parish Church of San José at the entrance of the original Cathedral of Santiago de los Caballeros form the historic heart of the city.



The Church of "San Pedro" adjacent to the "Obras Sociales" of the Saint Brother Pedro

In the back part, surrounded by a few lively restaurants and bars, lie the ruins of Santa Catalina Monastery with elaborately carved angelic figures and a striking archway, which gave inspiration to its street name "Calle del Arco."

The city has many quaint colonial-style boutique hotels and a good variety of restaurants, which is not only attractive to visiting tourists, but also for business events and congresses. From a culinary point of view, Antigua is a cosmopolitan city where international culinary delights are to be found alongside local specialties such as Tamales, Chuchitos, Pepián or Hilachas.

For those who are looking for exercise, there are spectacular mountain biking trails through the hills and mountains surrounding the Panchoy Valley. Here, adventurers find the perfect stage for virtually any outdoor activity. There is a wide offer for tours to the idyllic farms in the surrounding area, especially excursions on horseback are an unforgettable experience. Zip-lining, bird watching, coffee plantation tours including coffee tasting or baths in hot volcanic springs add to the huge offer of extraordinary activities.

BROTHER PEDRO

The Church of San Francisco el Grande, where the remnants of Pedro de San José Betancur lie, deserves special mention. The church is a place of pilgrimage for thousands of faithful Catholics and is part of the pilgrimage trail "Ruta del Peregrino." Brother Pedro was a Spanish Franciscan and missionary and was the first Central American to be beatified by the Vatican in 1980. In 2002, he was sanctified in Guatemala City by Pope John Paul II for his humanitarian work and the service to the needy.



Cathedral of Antigua Guatemala



Artfully finished window grille



Traditional Mayan weaving technique



During Holy Week, Antigua becomes the scene of fascinating colorful processions as an expression of the Catholic faith. The procession trails are sprinkled with dyed sawdust, which in combination with the colorful traditional robes of the faithful is a unique spectacle in itself.



A colonial house facade



Central Park



Indigenous woman weaving



Chicabal Lagoon



Prayer time



Ornate traditional masks



A typical market scene

Living Mayan Culture

The Guatemalan Altiplano includes the districts of Chimaltenango, Sololá, Quiché, Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, Huehuetenango and San Marcos. Its natural diversity and richness in fauna and flora makes it one of the most popular destinations in the country. In this idyllic landscape with its giant volcanoes and glittering lakes, the tranquility of the mighty nature becomes a source of inspiration. Here, the traditions of the Mayan civilisation have survived through the aeons, as the people who inhabit this land have preserved their languages, their attire and their cuisine for centuries.

CHIMALTENANGO

The name Chimaltenango can be translated with "place of the shields." In the summer, between the 20th and the 30th of July, the surrounding region of the same name witnesses a series of festivities consecrated to St. Anna, Mother of the Virgin Mary and Patron Saint of Chimaltenango. In Patzún, the Corpus Christi Celebration marks the end of the Easter period in June with colorful robes, floral decoration, incense, dance and fireworks.

You can relax in the natural pools of Los Aposentos, Pixcayá or Ojo de Agua. Adventurers should explore the Venecia and Devil's Caves and visit the waterfalls of the River Nicán. There are also impressive archaeological sites such as Iximché or Mixco Viejo.

Iximché

In the city of Tecpán lies Iximché, once a great city fortress of the Kakchiquel dominion, the last capital of the Mayan Kakchiquel empire. In 1524 it became the first capital of the Spanish conquistadors in Guatemala. In an area of 50 hectares there are pyramids, temples, palaces and other structures such as an arena for a ritual ball game.

Mixco Viejo

Around the area of today's San Martín Jilotepeque there was once the fortified town of Mixco Viejo, which was inhabited by the people of the Pocomames. In the late classical Mayan period it was an important spiritual center of the Kakchiquel realm. Here you will also find a well-preserved square ball-play arena, pyramids and observatories.



LAKE ATITLÁN

According to National Geographic and to the British writer Aldous Huxley "the most beautiful lake in the world."

The lake is located at 1,600 meters above sea level and is 18 km long at a depth of more than 350 m at some places. Warm air currents from the south intermingle here with colder air masses from the high plateau and produce a notorious wind called Xocomil ("sin collector") and stir the water surface. This natural phenomenon takes place in the majestic beauty of the Atitlán, Tolimán and San Pedro volcanoes that surround the lake. At the shore of the lake lie the towns Santa Catarina, San Antonio Palopó, San Lucas Tolimán, Santiago Atitlán, San Pedro, San Juan, San Pablo, San Marcos and Santa Cruz La Laguna.

There are two theories how the lake might have come into being: One constitutes that a dead volcano crater filled up with water over time; another suggests that three rivers once met at this point when the volcanoes slowly formed around them. The basin of Lake Atitlán, the Atitlán volcano as well as the volcanoes of San Pedro and Toliman are protected natural reserves and are managed by the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP.)

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HUEHUETENANGO

Huehuetenango means "City of the Ancients" and is surrounded by high rocky mountains. The best view is from the "Mirador Juan Diéguez Olaverri." Bird lovers will appreciate a variety of rare species in this mountainous area. Business and leisure life unfolds in the central square which is framed by the Town Hall, the Church of the Immaculate Conception and several neoclassical buildings. On the square there is a relief map of about 30 square meters in diameter.

The local festivals are worth a visit, particularly "Nuestra Señora del Carmen" on the 16th of July or "La Concepción" on the 8th of December. In the city of Todos Santos Cuchumatán, members of the Mayan Mam people start their celebrations in honor of the saints and the dead the night before with offerings and chants for the deceased loved ones.

A typical dish of the region is Jocón, which has been declared a National Cultural Heritage.

If you want to go on a discovery tour, the Quen Santo cave ("Holy Place") is highly recommended. The "Hoyo Cimarron" is a cylindrical hole with a diameter of approx. 170 m and a depth of 150 m that hides a patch of forest at its bottom. This unique habitat offers protection to a number of rare birds and other animal species.

Another cultural highlight is Zaculeu, an archaeological site attributed to the Mam people and a formerly fortified city in the post-classical era with squares, pyramids, temples and other buildings for various purposes. The local museum displays a collection of jade figurines, ceramic artefacts and human bones. If you prefer the seclusion of untouched nature, you should visit the Yolnabaj lagoon or the all-turquoise "Laguna Brava," about 4 square kilometers into the subtropical forest, or simply relax in one of the spas.

SOLOLÁ

All regions have names with specific meanings - Sololá can offer even two versions: One is derived from the word "Tzolojha" which means "waters of the elderflower" in the tongues of the Kakchiquel, Kiché and Tzutuhil. The second theory interprets the word's meaning as "return to the water" and deduces it from three syllables used in the Kakchiquel language: "tzol" (return,) "ol" (continuation) and "yá" (water.) The region contributes large portions of the country's wool production, but the cultivation of coffee and other crops is becoming increasingly important as an economic base of the local people. The culinary specialties of the region are stews with potatoes, patín, cress with chirmol sauce or pork loin ragout.



Cofrades, Chichicastenango

Sololá has numerous historical and archaeological sites. The famous natural park of Lake Atitlán spreads across 120 hectares in the valley of "San Buenaventura." Here, the world of today blends with ancient Mayan traditions in Panajachel with its beaches, hotels, cafes, restaurants and night clubs.

QUETZALTENANGO OR XELA

Quetzaltenango takes its name from the royal title by Don Francisco Izquín Nehaíb of 1558. The local K'iche'e people who once settled here, called this region "Xelahuh" and "Xelahuh Queh" (place of ten deer.) Located in a wide valley surrounded by the volcanoes of Santa María, Santiaguito (one of three active volcanoes of the country), Cerro Quemado, Siete Orejas, Chicabal and Lacandón, there are countless possibilities for mountaineers and hikers. From Cerro Zunil, Zunilito, El Galápago and El Baúl you get spectacular views of the city of Quetzaltenango and the beautiful surrounding nature. Quetzaltenango is one of the most important and largest cities in Guatemala. It is an industrial center for the production of textiles and liquors. The City is a strategic trading hub and a cultural center alike.

The local cuisine is characterized by so-called paches (potato pockets), tamales de cambray and rompopo. Here, too, visitors find a great tradition of various festivals and dances, one highlight being Easter; but also the country's independence celebration, the "Feria Centroamericana" or the Patron's festival in honor of the Virgin of the Rosary are celebrated with joy and dedication. The Ermita de la Concepción in the village of Salcaj' is a religious monument that attracts visitors from the entire contry and beyond. It is the seat of the first Central American Catholic Church.

Volcano and Lagoon of Chicabal

Lake Chicabal lies inside the volcano of the same name at an altitude of 2172 m. What is now the National Natural Heritage of "San Martín Sacatepéquez" was considered by the Maya to be one of the most significant sacred places. Just like hundreds of years ago, ceremonies are held

THERMAL SPRINGS

A number of thermal springs surface from beneath the volcanic rock, some of which contain sulfuric water: The natural spas of Almolonga, Cantel, las Fuentes Georginas and Aguas Amargas offer delightful retreats for relaxation and healing. The "Fuentes Georginas" are today thermal baths coming from the Zuni volcano.



Quetzaltenango or Xela

on four altars dedicated to the heavens, for the incantation of rain.

QUICHÉ

The name Quiché is derived from "qui" (many) and "Che" (trees) and refers to the rich forests of the area. Santa Cruz del Quiché is the administrative center of the region and an important center for the preservation of the ancient Mayan rites and traditions in their original form. The local cuisine is characterized by the extensive use of spices. Some of the typical dishes are pinol (roasted corn and chicken with tamales), boxboles, chicken with apazote, chojin chichasteco and white tamales.



Indigenous girl



Santo Tomás Church

On August 18, the Patron's festival in honor of Santa Elena de la Cruz is celebrated in Santa Cruz del Quiché. There are a few other festivals throughout the year worth attending, particularly some indigenous religious ceremonies conducted by mayan priests whom intertwine with the deceased.

The town of Playa Grande Ixcán, like many neighboring communities, offers a variety of natural attractions such as rivers, waterfalls, hot springs and caves. In Canillá lies the archaeological site "Los Cerritos Chijoj." San Andrés Sajcabajá is a traditional place of pilgrimage, where the faithful complete their march of penance crawling on all fours. The village of Laj Chimel in Uspantán is the birthplace of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr. Rigoberta Menchú. Chicamán is a natural paradise famous for its untouched nature and of its inhabitants' lively culture, customs and traditions that have been handed down over generations from the Mayan Poqomché, Achí, Queckché and Kiché people. Castilian influences add to the unique mix.

The town of Chichicastenango is located in the same district and is one of the most important traditional cultural and religious centers of the Mayan civilisation.



Moros

Chichicastenango

Chichicastenango means "place of nettles" and was founded by members of the K'iche' people who had fled from the destruction of Uvatlán. Today, the city is home to the Maxeños and prides itself to be one of the country's most important tourist destinations when it comes to exploring the cultural history of the Maya. It's where the Popol Vuh was found, the legendary religious Mayan book that tells about the origin of mankind and that was translated into Spanish by Fray Francisco Ximenez.

On Thursdays and Sundays, when the indigenous farmers come to the city from the surrounding villages to sell their products in the markets, it seems like very little has changed since the ancient times of the Mayan empire. The atmosphere is bustling and serene at the same time.

Among the numerous tourist attractions in the city, the Cerro Pascual Abaj, the Museum of Masks, the Gumarcaj Excavation Site and the Church of the Apostle Thomas from 1540 truly stand out. The latter reflects the splendor of the colonial period and at the same time makes reference to the 18 months of the ancient Mayan Calendar with its 18 steps. The Gumarcaj site is also called Uvatlán and was the last capital of the Mayan K'iche' people. Its heyday was in the post-classical period, and is described as a powerful city in the book Popol Vuh.

THE POPOL VUH

"Popol" (community) and "Vuh" (book), "Book of the Council" or "Book of the Community"

"At first there was the earth, the mountains, and the valleys, the streams of the waters parted, and creeks flowed freely between the hills, and the waters were divided, when the high mountains appeared."

"After that the little animals of the mountains were created, the keeper of all the forests, the beasts of the mountains, the deer, birds, lions, tigers, snakes, vipers, the guardians of the thicket."

The celebrations in honor of the city's patron St. Thomas are celebrated with traditional dances from 13 to 21 December.

SAN MARCOS

This district is home to the highest peak of Central America. Also, the two volcanoes Tacana and Tajumulco rise up here and create a diverse biosphere bustling with countless species thanks to their different heights. This region is also home to the legendary Quetzal, Guatemala's heraldic bird.

In the lagoon of San Marcos, on the western shores of Lake Atitlán, this cakchiquel farming and fishing village is famous for its local specialties such as the tamale marquense, the mole of bananas and turkey, the salpicón, cambrayes, tayuyos and atole de maíz.

In San Marcos, you can admire the caves of "La Castalia." Moreover, the "Agua Tibia" thermal bath with its sulphurous steam producing source is worth a visit. On the Naranjo River, you can go canoeing, while the port of Ocos invites you to a leisurely walk. The Mayan Palace and "Piedra Partida," the Split Rock, are compulsory boxes to tick. On April 25, the patron saint of the district is commemorated with a spring mass.

Eco-tourism is becoming increasingly important for the region but also for the entire country. Highlights for particularly original natural experiences are e.g. the National Park Cerro Tzankujil and the ascent to the volcanoes Tajumulco (the highest peak in the country) and Tacana. Peace and tranquility are found in the "Centro Pirámide," where meditations and alternative therapies are offered.

TOTONICAPÁN

Another district whose name allows for two interpretations is Totonicapán. On the one hand, the name is composed of the syllables "Totl" and "Nicapan", which means "mountain of birds" in the Náhuatl language. In the tongue of the K'iche', the region is called "Chwi meq'ina", meaning "Over

the warm water." As one of the highest regions of the country it can be quite cool here. The tamales or the local corn groats taste just as good here as the traditional bean broth. Archangel Michael is worshipped as the patron saint of the district every year between September 24 and 30. At Easter, there are processions in which the suffering and the death of Jesus Christ are portrayed.

Thursday is market day in the town of San Cristóbal Totonicapán. Here, you can buy the typical local costumes and textiles as well as hand-made pottery. On Saturdays, the market turns into a sea of color motion being the central meeting point for the entire district. In San Francisco, a weekly market is also held on Fridays; it is the largest of the region.

Some of the city's main attractions are the colorful Church of San Andrés Xecul, the city theater, the parish Church of the Archangel Michael and the Center for Arts and Crafts. In the caves of San Miguel and of Chuisán Antonio Mundo there are sacred sites of the K'iche's. Experiencing the "Aventura Maya Quiché" at the Nueve Sillas or the Maria Tecún Peak is also an option.



San Andrés Xecul Church



Tikal National Park

Maya World Adventure

In the north of Guatemala lies the Heart of the Mayan World. Fourteen municipalities form the heartland of the ancient realm, where various indigenous languages such as Itzá, Lacandón, Mopán, Q'eqchi' and Ixil are still spoken. Flores is the regional administrative center and starting point for discovery trips to the numerous tourist attractions of the district. Situated on a small island in the lake of Petén Itzá, the town not only fascinates its visitors by its location, but also by its winding alleys, picturesque shops, restaurants, hotels and street stands with typical dishes of the region.

ONE OF THE PLANET'S LUNGS

The tropical forests of Petén are considered one of the "lungs" of the planet because of their unique vegetation. In order to preserve their biodiversity, large parts have been protected, e.g. the "Maya Biosphere Reserve." In addition, the region bears an incredible historical value. Archeology has not yet unearthed all of the jungle's secrets. The label "Paseo Maya" was created to help promote the region's charms for tourists from all over the world. Exploring tours through the rainforest, horseback riding or canoeing on one of the lakes and rivers like the San Juan, the Río Azul, the Subín, Mopán or the Chiquibul are unforgettable experiences. This is the ideal place to switch off, relax, get to know and learn from its unique archaeological sites such as the Tikal National Park, Yaxhá, Ceibal, Aguateca, San Bartolo, El Mirador or Uaxactún. The region is largely untouched and the ancient sites have remained largely untouched so that the ruins that spring from the wild jungle unfold their irresistible and distinctive charm to every visitor.



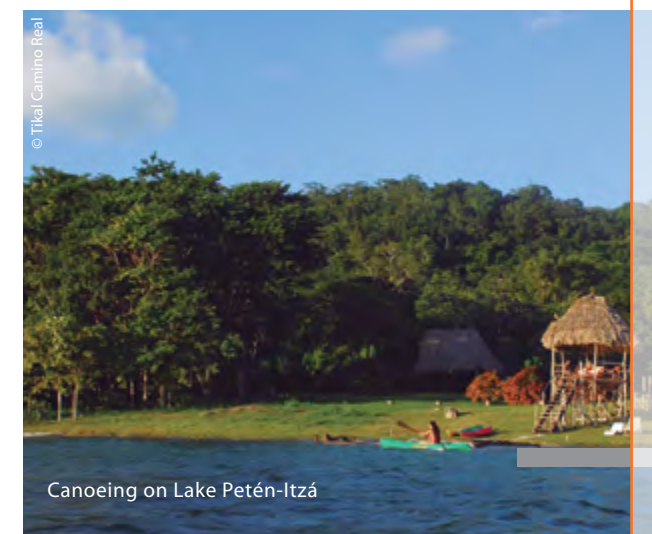
Dawn over Tikal



Flores



Ocellated Turkey



Canoeing on Lake Petén-Itzá

TIKAL NATIONAL PARK

Tikal means "Place of Voices," and with its 576 square kilometres it is one of the largest cities ever created in the Mayan realm. Since 1979, the whole area has been declared World Cultural and Natural Heritage. On this gigantic surface, more than 3,000 archaeological buildings and artefacts have been excavated, which originated during preclassical and classical periods.

The Plaza Mayor, located in the heart of the Archaeological Park of Tikal, stands out from all the other temples and sites. The square is framed by the so-called "Temple I" (Temple of the Great Jaguar) and II (Temple of the Masks), as well as by the northern and the central Acropolis. The square of the Great Pyramid or the Lost World, as well as the Palace of Windows, with its many connected rooms, is one of the oldest buildings in Tikal, next to a series of other monuments.

Temple III or the "Temple of the Jaguar Priest" is famous for its elaborately carved cornices. Temple IV ("Double Headed Snake Temple") is the tallest in Tikal, rising 70 meters in the air. From the top steps, the dizzy-eyed viewer gets a spectacular view over the entire park. Temple VI is also called "Temple of Inscriptions" because of the glyphs hewn into the cornice.



El Remate



A Macaw

YAXHÁ NATIONAL PARK

The park is named after the adjacent town and means "green water." More than 500 monumental buildings, including an astronomical complex, two twin pyramids and the Acropolis, crossed by streets, squares and alleys give testimony to the richness and complexity of the society that once inhabited this city.

From Temple 216, the tallest discovered building to date, one can look far over the rain forest to the lagoons of Yaxhá and Sacnab, deep in the Maya Biosphere Reserve.

ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION SITE "PIEDRAS NEGRAS"

Once known as "Yo'ki'b," the site is located in the National Park "Sierra de Lacandón" in the administrative district of La Libertad. Piedras Negras is considered one of the most important Mayan cities and is world famous for the sculptures that are exhibited worldwide.

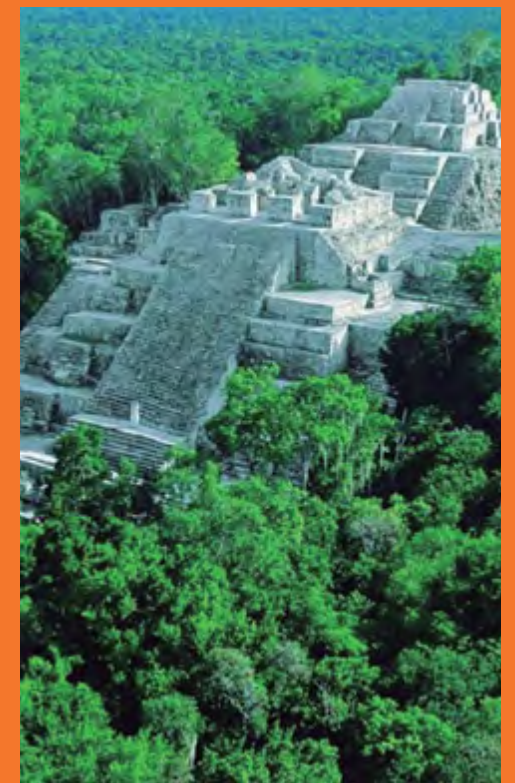
The Sierra del Lacandón National Park was declared a protected zone in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in 1990 and is under the protection of the Foundation "Defenders of Nature Conservation" and the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP).

NATIONAL PARK "EL MIRADOR"

The park is surrounded by a formation of karstic mountains and covers an area of 3,000 square kilometers. In this area, there are many ancient Mayan monuments to be found but the natural scenery alone is breathtaking. The subtropical forests are home to a few rare and endangered animal and plant species. The area can only be reached by helicopter or on foot in a demanding but worthwhile three-day march.

El Mirador is an ancient Mayan city northwest of Petén, which includes the monumental architectural complexes of Tintal, La Florida, the Danta Temple, the Frieze, the Tiger and Wakna temples in the midst of a wild jungle landscape. "The Great Danta Pyramid," is named after the largest animal that once inhabited these territories.

With 2,800 cubic meters it is the largest pyramid in the world by volume and the highest in all of the American continent standing 72 meters tall.





Tikal

AGUATECA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Aguateca or "Pa'Wits," as it is called in the local Mayan K'inich language, translates "splendid split mountain" and is located in the higher part of the Petexbatun lagoon, surrounded by cliffs and jungle. The ancient city includes more than 700 buildings, of which eleven have been restored. There is even an artificial rock bridge that spans the crack that divides the site. It provides valuable information about the reasons for the decline of the Mayan civilization. In Aguateca, there is a spectacular viewpoint with a view of the river and the lagoon Petexbatun.

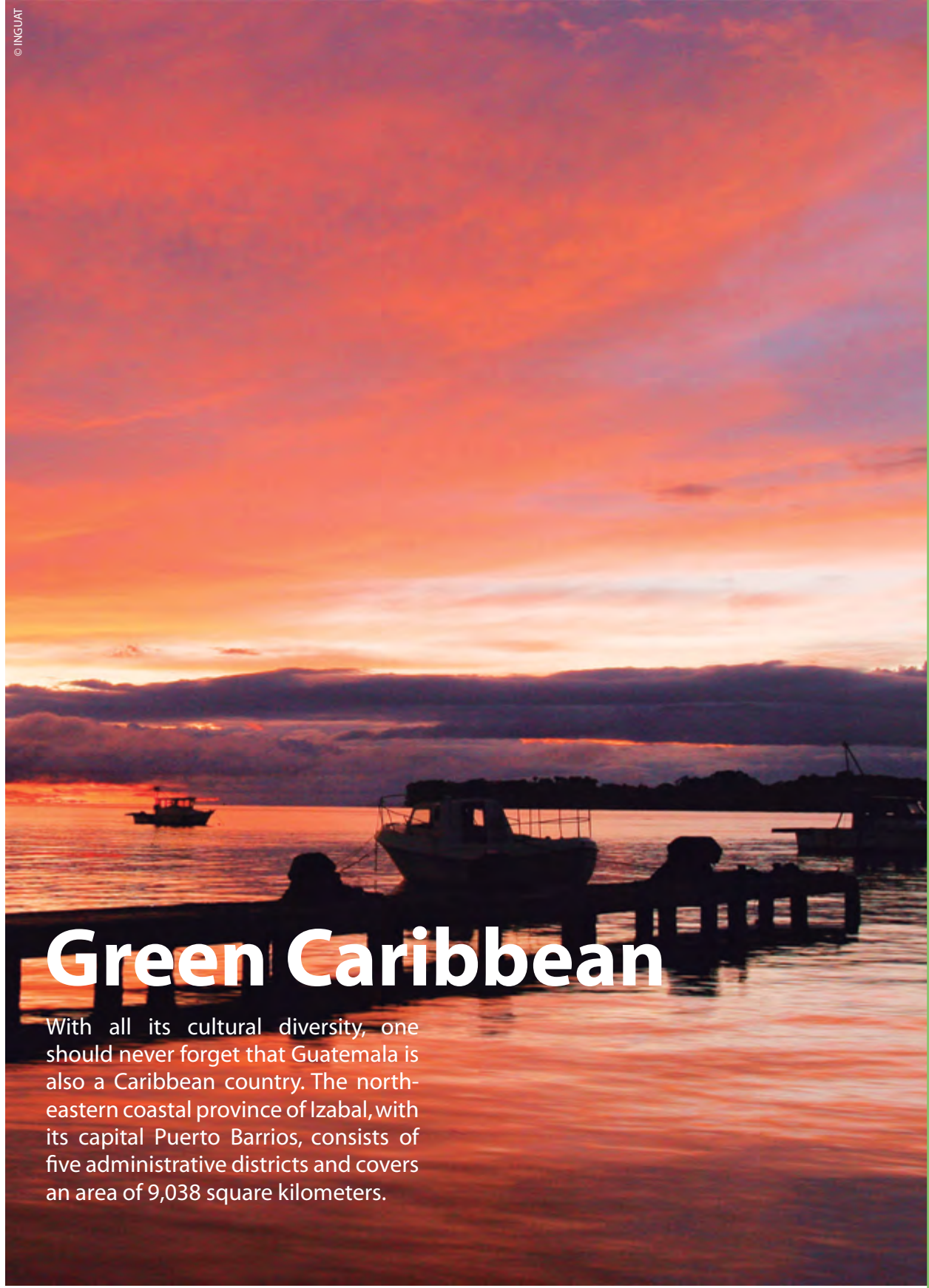
UAXACTÚN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Uaxactún is considered one of the oldest cities of the Mayan empire. It dates back to the pre-classical and classical periods. Here, the architectural and artistic development of the ancient civilization of the lowland region becomes lucid: Inscriptions were found on stelae from the time around 328 to 899 AD. This town was abandoned before the founding of Tikal in the tenth century and subsequently devoured by the vegetation. Its rediscovery began in 1931 with the first scientific work of the "Carnegie Institution of Washington." Sylvanus Morley, the first archaeological pioneer to cross the Naranjo River, named the city Uaxactún or "Eight Stones."

One of the archaeological highlights of the site is the so-called "Structure A-2," a cut-off pyramid, which was presumably built for the nobility as a platform for the attendance of sacrificial ceremonies and other public events. "Palace XVIII" is a splendid temple with the best view of the area and has a variety of rooms, which is why scholars suggest that it once was a palace building. Its stepped form, however, points to its function as a temple in which the ruler oversaw important ceremonies. "Palace V" is also called Acropolis. Four graves were found inside of it, which are believed to have contained members of "Rana Humeante" King's family. In the building group E, there is an observatory, from which the movements of the sun and the course of the seasons were observed to calculate the right times for sowing and harvesting.



Yaxhá



Green Caribbean

With all its cultural diversity, one should never forget that Guatemala is also a Caribbean country. The north-eastern coastal province of Izabal, with its capital Puerto Barrios, consists of five administrative districts and covers an area of 9,038 square kilometers.

Lake Izabal



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7 Altares



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Fort San Felipe

The region is predominantly agricultural, especially in its interior. Bananas, rice, corn and fruit thrive well in Izabal thanks to its warm climate. It also favors the enormous biodiversity and natural beauty of the province. The ports of Santo Tomás de Castilla and Puerto Barrios are busy economic centers. Freight, cruise ships and speed boats alike come to shore here, or continue from here to the rivers Lámpara, Ciénega, Zarco, Polochic, Sarstún or Río Dulce to bring goods and travellers to the interior of the country.

These waterways are not only vital transport and trade routes for the region and the whole country, but also valuable freshwater reserves. These include Río Dulce, Bocas del Polochic, Punta de Manabique, the Biotope Chocón Machacas or Lake Izabál, the largest inland waters of Guatemala. The province

also boasts archaeological highlights: the historical site of Quiriguá is a UNESCO World Heritage site. San Felipe fortress is also worth a visit. The impressive mix of cultures on the Atlantic coast becomes particularly evident in the joyous Garifuna people.

RÍO DULCE

Río Dulce has been a nature reserve since 1955, making it one of the first in Guatemala. The river connects Lake Izabal with the Bay of Amatique, covering a distance of almost 43 km. It crosses an extension known as "El Golfete Dulce."

The river runs about 16 km from the "Golfete" to the sea and flows through a gorge, which ends up in the bay. This section is of spectacular beauty and offers a wide variety of jungle, mangroves and watercourses, a rich biotope for different animals and plants.

FORT SAN FELIPE DE LARA

On the banks of the Río Dulce lies the colonial Fort San Felipe. It was built by the Spaniards in the 17th century to defend the strategically important waterways against threats from the Caribbean Sea towards Lake Izabál, a popular target for pirates. Nowadays, the fortress, which has already served as a military base, prison and customs office, is a national monument and one of the most popular tourist attractions in the region.

The complex has been carefully restored, so that not only is a visit to its interior including the viewpoint at the top a must, but also a trip by boat around the impressive stone walls.

LAKE IZABAL

Lake Izabal or Golfo Dulce is the largest lake in the country and spreads across a surface of 590 square kilometers at a depth of 18 meters.

It is fed by the streams flowing from the Sierra de Santa Cruz towards the coast, as well as by the rivers Polochic, Oscuro, Zarquito, Bataxte, El Chapín, La Balandra, Las Cañas, Los Linares, Los Espinos,



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THE GARÍFUNA PEOPLE

The Garífuna are the result of the intermingling of three ethnic groups: the Caribs, the Arawak and the West Africans who originally came to the Caribbean as slaves from across the Atlantic. In the entire area from Belize to Honduras, this ethnic group has a strong cultural presence. Their traditions from different parts of the world have shaped their own characteristics in music, dance and religion. Examples of this are the Yancunú dance, the Shumba, the Jungujugu or the Gunjae. Rhythm and sound are determined by the marimba, the harp, the violin and the guitarrilla. Garífuna is spoken as a genuine language as well as Spanish.

Paderones, Sumache, Túnico and Sauce. Its water flows into the Río Dulce, which flows through the Golfete Dulce until it eventually reaches the Caribbean Sea in Livingston. The lake is completely navigable and is surrounded by beautiful beaches such as El Estor, Mariscos and Playa Dorada, as well as a lush vegetation that is home to a diverse animal world. In the waters of the lake and the Río Dulce, the Manatee is also to be found (an endangered marine mammal.)

QUIRIGUÁ ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

Quiriguá is located in the region of the "Valle Bajo del Río Motagua" and was declared a National Monument in 1970. In 1974, the area became an Archaeological Park and in 1981 it was given the status of a World Cultural Heritage site for its cultural and historical significance. The history of the village goes back to the late pre-classical period (400 BC to about 200 AD,) in which a Maya civilization prevailed, but eventually perished at the end of the Late Classical period (600-900 AD.) The existing buildings date from the late period, while the buildings of previous generations were built over and are now hidden in the ground. The highest stelae of the Maya that have been found so far are here. The stela E surpasses all others with a height of 10.6 meters. It represents "K'ak' Tiliw Chan Yopaat," the regent of Quiriguá. Other more common representative buildings such as an Acropolis or the Great Square, the ceremonial place can be found here. The Acropolis consists of palaces decorated with colorful stucco vaults as residences for the elite. The central square was a public place where religious ceremonies were held and where steles with zoomorphic motifs were placed.

Stele of the Great Jaguar



© fotosembler

Playa Blanca



Nature Paradise

The region of Las Verapaces consists of the two parts: Alta Verapaz and Baja Verapaz. Both districts are largely covered by lush primeval forests with quite different ecosystems, which are exemplary for dry forests or for the thorny and bushy chaparral. Cloud and rainforests can be also found here which provide refuge for an overwhelming variety of species, including the Quetzal and the Guatemalan national flower Monja Blanca, as well as a number of endangered species. There are more than 800 orchid species alone in this nature paradise.



Hiking tour in the tropical forest

The morphology and geography of this region make it a dream destination for adventurers who want to be immersed in the untouched nature. Whitewater rafting on the rapids of the Cahabón River, canoeing trips or abseiling can be practiced here just as well as unwinding in one of the cascades and waterfalls. Rest in the fresh air is guaranteed in this tropical mountain landscape with its pilgrim paths, the route through the biotope of the Quetzal and the extraordinary Lanquin and Candelaria Caves.

ALTA VERAPAZ

The subregion Alta Verapaz, with its capital, Cobán, is one of the most biodiverse in the country. Because of its Karstic terrain you will find impressive caves, lagoons, waterfalls and unique water-filled holes in the rock, so-called "cenotes." The natural pools of Semuc Champey in the river Cahabón, the caves of Candelaria or the grottoes of Rey Marcos are unforgettable highlights. The name Cobán derives from the Q'eqchi language and means "In the Clouds," a reference to the raininess of the evergreen region called "Chipi Chipi" by the locals. The city was founded by the Spaniards in the basin of the River Cahabón in the 16th century. Around 6,000 people from all over the world come to Cobán every year. Reason being the world-class semi-marathon held here, one of the largest sporting events in Guatemala and one of the most important sporting events in Latin America.

Las Conchas Spa

Las Conchas Spa is located in the village of Se'pemech

in the Chahal district, surrounded by lush vegetation and an idyllic landscape. Nature lovers will never want to leave the enchanting waterfalls again.

The Eco Villa "Río Sachichá"

The ecological villa is located directly on the road between Cobán and Chisec. The property offers wonderful natural experiences in the lush forests, the turquoise waters of the river or the marvelous waterfalls that shoot from the rocks. Also, the cave of Sapoc is very worth seeing.

The Lanquín Grottoes

The caves of Lanquín are one of the first nature reserves in Guatemala and are unique for their ramified system of caves and grottoes with spectacular dome-shaped ceilings and striking stone formations created by the erosion throughout the millennia. In the Mayan culture, the belief prevails that this place is the "heart of heaven" in which the "mystery of the ages" is hidden.

The Grottoes of King Marcos

They were discovered in 1988 and are also regarded as sacred places. The natural stone formations recall sculptures.

"Las Islas" Health Resort

Four kilometers from San Pedro Carcha lies the natural health resort "Las Islas." In its immediate vicinity, you will find several waterfalls that are fed from the mountain streams. In the refreshing spring waters it is easy to get detached from



everyday life. Here, in the refreshing spring water is easy to switch off and disconnect.

Sepalau Lagoon

Strictly speaking, four lagoons with crystal clear, turquoise water form this natural paradise in the tranquility of the dense forest, which invite you to swim or canoe.

BAJA VERAPAZ

The capital of this subregion is called Salamá. In this area, you can find six different vegetative zones according to the Holdridge scale. Since 1978, efforts to protect this unique habitat have been greatly intensified by state and private initiatives.

"El Trapiche" Museum

The "Museo del Trapiche" is located in San Jerónimo. The building was the first sugar cane mill in Central

THE CAVES OF CANDELARIA

This impressive cave system is located in the National Park "Cuevas de Candelaria" between Chisec and Raxruhá. A refuge amid a diverse flora and fauna, which was revered as a sacred place even in the times of the ancient Maya people of the Q'eqchi'. In the caves of Candelaria there are two particularly impressive specimens, the "window of security" and the "dome of the bats." The municipality of Candelaria-Camposanto offers excursions to these caves, which are easily accessible and provide illustrative examples of rock formations and eroded structures. Along the rivers, you can walk in the footsteps of the ancient Maya. There are up to twenty archaeological sites nearby.

The touristic exploration of these caves is organized by the "Association of the Maya Q'eqchi' for the Development of Tourism in Candelaria-Camposanto," which at the same time takes care of the preservation and protection of the ancient Mayan heritage. A ride through the underground part of the river Candelaria among mystically illuminated cave formations is highly recommended and the size of these structures will leave every visitor speechless.

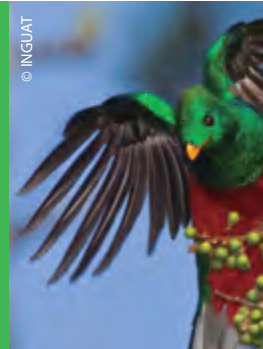
America and was founded by Dominican monks and built according to the latest standards at the time.

The "Salto de Chilascó"

With an altitude of 130 meters, Chilascó is the highest natural waterfall in Central America. It belongs to the Biosphere Reserve "Sierra de las Minas," where the Quetzal is also found.

THE BIOTOPE OF THE QUETZAL

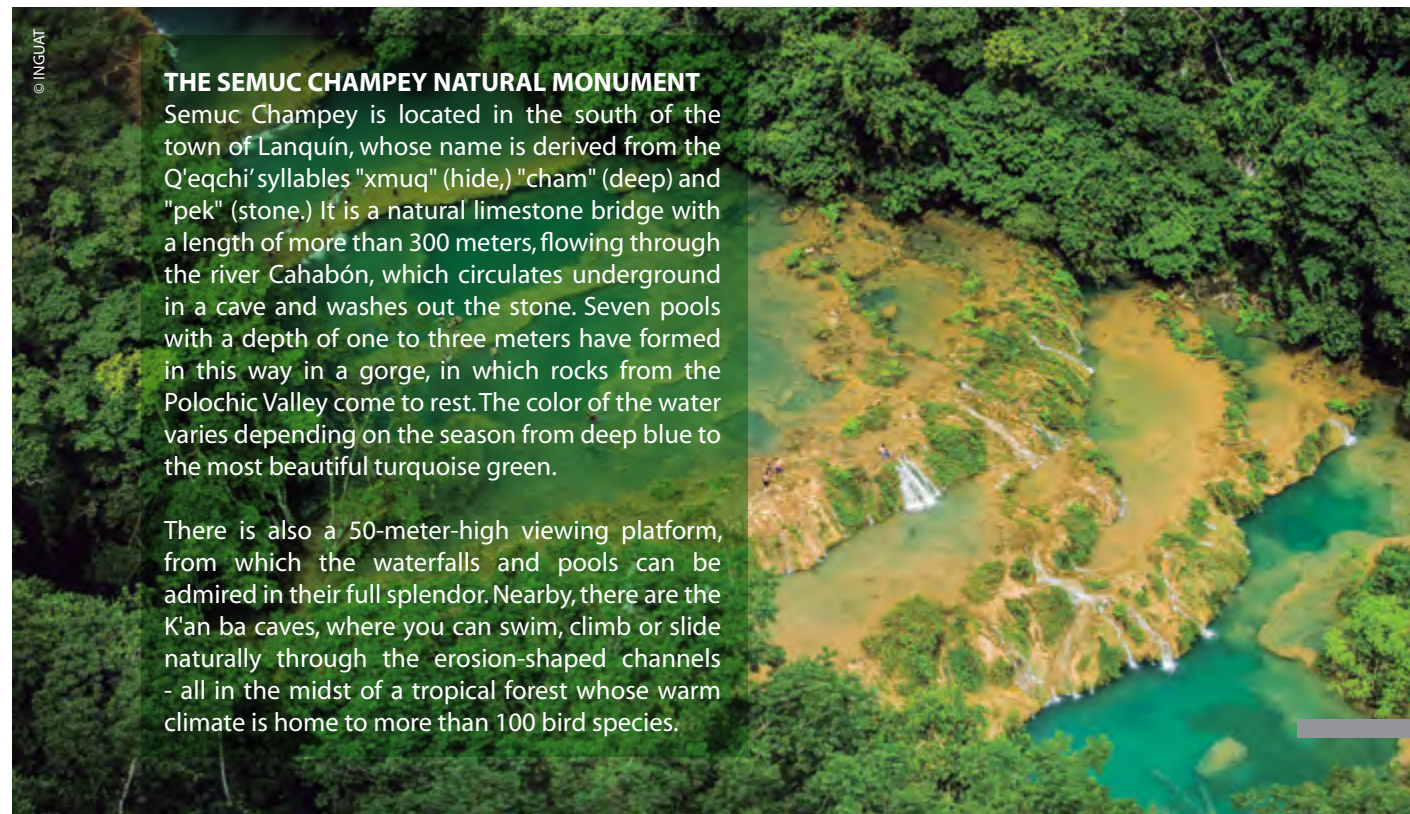
In this dense tropical forest area of more than three thousand hectares lies the Biotope "Mario Dary Rivera," named after its founder, where the Quetzal, the Guatemalan national bird, has its ideal habitat.



THE SEMUC CHAMPEY NATURAL MONUMENT

Semuc Champey is located in the south of the town of Lanquín, whose name is derived from the Q'eqchi' syllables "xmuq" (hide), "cham" (deep) and "pek" (stone.) It is a natural limestone bridge with a length of more than 300 meters, flowing through the river Cahabón, which circulates underground in a cave and washes out the stone. Seven pools with a depth of one to three meters have formed in this way in a gorge, in which rocks from the Polochic Valley come to rest. The color of the water varies depending on the season from deep blue to the most beautiful turquoise green.

There is also a 50-meter-high viewing platform, from which the waterfalls and pools can be admired in their full splendor. Nearby, there are the K'an ba caves, where you can swim, climb or slide naturally through the erosion-shaped channels - all in the midst of a tropical forest whose warm climate is home to more than 100 bird species.





Magical and Diverse



Sport fishing

With its volcanic beaches, the Pacific coast is an exceptional seaside location. Strictly protected sea turtles, iguanas and crocodiles live here, while 300 kilometers of beautiful beaches invite to relax, surf and enjoy.

This Pacific region is one of the best fishing areas for the sailfish. As a destination for this sport, Guatemala is unmatched in Central America; and is considered second-best in the world.



In the mangrove forests of Chiquimulilla, one comes into direct contact with the unspoiled nature - a paradise for bird watchers. But also volcanoes want to be climbed and archaeological sites such as Takalik Abaj are waiting to be discovered. Several amusement parks offer fun and variety for the whole family.

THE XETULUL AND XOCOMIL AMUSEMENT PARKS BY IRTA

The "Institute for Recreation and Leisure of the Workers of the Private Sector of Guatemala" (IRTRA) runs the two amusement parks Xocomil and Xetulul with different activities and facilities for every taste. The parks have a reputation for being among the best in the world. The success of these parks has created an economic boom in Retalhuleu, which has developed into a real tourism region.

TAKALIK ABAJ ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

Takalik Abaj, an ancient Mayan site near Retalhuleu, is dedicated to the underworld of the Mayan cosmos. This place is also significant because it

MONTEERRICO

The Nature Reserve of Monterrico is located on the shores of the Pacific Ocean in the Santa Rosa district and serves as a shelter for the "Leatherback" and "Olive Ridley" sea turtles that come ashore to breed. From there, the newly hatched baby turtles crawl back into the sea as fast as they can. The Pacific coast is characterized by the black sands of the volcano sediment ground by the tides. In front of this mystical backdrop it is a real pleasure to sit in one of the fishing villages by the sea and to discover the culinary specialties of the region.



is the only one where Mayas and Olmecs lived alongside each other. The observatory is among the achievements of this city, as well as its hydraulic system for the distribution of drinking water and the early development of the Mayan scripture.

Takalik Abaj offers sensational historical discoveries in a stunning natural setting, as well as artefacts of the Olmecs. The central group contains Stele 5, one of the earliest known sculptures of the Mayan era.

AUTO SAFARI CHAPÍN

This nature reserve is located in the municipality of Guanagazapa in the district of Escuintla. Strictly speaking, this is the first zoo in Central America that is accessible by car and where animals can be observed at close range. Since 1980, it has been an open natural reserve with the aim of preserving the fauna and flora as much as possible for its visitors, but also to promote appreciation for the beauty and diversity of nature.

PORT OF SAN JOSÉ

With the economic development of Central America, the import and export of goods quickly became more and more important, which made the construction of an international trading port with sufficient capacity essential. Considering the necessary geographic pre-requisites, it was decided to transfer the port from Iztapa to El Zapote, which finally came into operation in 1853 under the name of San José de Guatemala. It was not until 1920 that the city of the same name was

PACAYA VOLCANO

The Pacaya volcano is one of Guatemala's 33 volcanoes and one of the most active in Central America. Towering 2,552 meters in the sky, it is situated on the volcanic arch of Central America, precisely between the regions of Escuintla and Guatemala.

Since its last big eruption in 1965, the volcano has never fully come to rest. Its regular rumbling and lava flows put on a spectacular demonstration of the mountain's natural force. The massif is complex; In the east, there are three rounded hills, including the Cerro Grande and the Cerro Chiquito. The village of



founded. Due to its location on the Pacific Ocean, the port of San José has a wide selection of hotels, restaurants and leisure facilities, especially the striking black sand beaches. Also, fishing, kayaking or surfing are popular activities.



Surfing in the Pacific



WHALE WATCHING

Guatemala is home to humpback whales, which roam off the Guatemalan Pacific coast from the end of December to April to find food and to mate. These amazing mammals grow up to 16 meters in length and can be observed on boat trips during this period - a unique attraction for families. All year round you can see dolphins, rays and turtles.

Texts: ACG



Mystical and Natural

The region of Oriente is located in a warm climatic zone and is characterized by the contrasts of its districts Zacapa, Chiquimula, Jalapa, Jutiapa and Progreso. The "Sierra de las Minas" with its dense jungle, the most extensive in Central America, is part of the Zacapa district and is protected for its great biodiversity. More than 885 species of mammals, birds and reptiles live in this intact ecosystem. Moreover, one of the region's most important Catholic pilgrimage destinations is located in the village of Esquipulas: The *Basilica Menor of the Cristo Negro*.

The number of natural treasures in this region, such as the Ipala volcano with the lagoon of the same name, is enormous. Here, it is said, the earth radiates an ancient mysticism and spirituality. The Güija lagoon is a special place as well. If you are interested in a tour throughout the course of evolution, you should visit the Museum of Paleontology and Archeology of Estanzuela "Ing. Roberto Woolfolk Saravia," where more than 50,000 year-old mastodon and whale skeletons are exhibited.

The hospitality of the local people is overwhelming, and the local cuisine is varied and exciting. Beside the hearty churrascos and pork rind, chicken with cream and loroco or chicken broth with güisquil or quesadillas, just to name a few, there are also the traditional sweets of Esquipulas.



Orchid

The Palaeontological Museum Ing. Roberto Woolfolk Saravia in Estanzuela

The German geologist Karl Sapper found fossil remains here, and together with Barnum Brown and Jorge Ibarra, he conducted the first investigations to secure the precious items. It quickly became clear that the construction of a museum would be necessary for the preservation and adequate presentation of the finds. The museum opened on June 27, 1974. The exhibited fossils all come from excavations in Guatemala, such as remains of animals that lived during the Cenozoic. These include mastodons, sloths and giant armadillos. The museum presents information about the development of life in the

ESQUIPULAS

The "Central American Capital of Faith" is visited by hundreds of pilgrims every year who come to pray to the Black Christ of Esquipulas. Especially on 15 January, the parishioners approach the Shrine to make wishes and requests to the Creator, to repent and to confess their faith.

The *Basilica del Santo Cristo de Esquipulas*

The *Basilica del Santo Cristo de Esquipulas* is an imposing baroque building from the 18th century and is considered to be the largest Catholic church in all of Central America. Since 12 June 1970, the *Basilica* was declared an art historical monument. It has four bell-towers and three naves, a dome through which daylight falls into the interior to magnificently illuminate it, an atrium surrounded by six pillars, and a silver chandelier with polished crystal. The *Basilica* attracts pilgrims all year round, who want to see the image of the Lord of Esquipulas, the "Black Christ." The crucifixion sculpture was carved by the artist Quirio Cataño from cedar wood. Miracles are attributed to the "Black Christ," and still to this day faithful Catholics come and present veneration medals to the statue.



The "Black Christ" of Esquipulas



THE VOLCANO OF IPALA

The 1,650-meter high volcano overshadows the city of Ipala in the district of Chiquimula. There are two routes up to the top: The first begins in the village of Agua Blanca, from the starting point to the summit the route heads upwards nine kilometers past some picturesque villages. The second route to the peak also starts in Agua Blanca. From there, the trail crosses the Cerro Zacharias and arrives at the destination after an ambitious 13-kilometer climb overlooking beautiful landscapes. Those who reach the summit will be rewarded with an unforgettable view over the wide countryside and the crater lake with its clear waters.

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water and how it made its way onto land, but also deals with the formation of the continents. Mayan artifacts are also exhibited here.

The Waterfalls of Urlanta

The Urlanta Falls are located in the district of Jalapa. They are unique as they are made up of several single smaller waterfalls that descend from the mountains and unite here, the highest of which coming down from 70 meters above. This rare natural spectacle is the perfect spot to unwind, relax and enjoy.

The Waterfalls of Tatasirire

The Tatasirire Falls consist of six waterfalls, the first of which is known as the Salto Altar.

"Pino Dulce" Ecological Park

The village of Pino Dulce in the municipality of Mataquescuintla lies in the Jalapa district and sits at the highest point of the Oriente region at an altitude of 2,450 meters. Surrounded by all but untouched nature, you should explore the surrounding villages and the lovely landscape by canoe or on horse-back.

The Atatupa Natural Resort

In the town of Asunción Mita in Jutiapa you will find a natural spa with thermal water, a hot water spring and an artificial pool.

Lake Güija

When the artificial lake was created, the town of Güixar in Asunción Mita in the Jutiapa district was flooded. The lake has an extension of 44.2 square kilometers, one third of which lies on Guatemalan territory and two-thirds across the border in El Salvador.



Traditional sweets of Esquipulas

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Tatasirire Falls



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Heart of the Mayan World
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