

# GUATEMALA





# Destination - Guatemala

Guatemala is a feast for the eyes and a mystery to the soul – a fantastic yet unpredictable land, drenched in rich traditions, natural beauty, and a fascinating history. Hand-woven clothing brilliantly dazzles in primary colours; ancient temples as tall as skyscrapers just imposing above the verdant jungle canopy; volcanoes erupt with awesome fury and fiery power in the night sky; while brilliant tropical sunshine warms you.

However, nature's awe-inspiring wonders can turn sinister in a land vulnerable to natural disasters, and optimistic skies are often clouded by a dark, checkered past. Politically the country struggles to find its way, while spiritually it has managed to hang onto something other cultures have lost. Magic abounds, and the people still hold fast to ancient traditions and stunning beliefs. Pagan rituals are still performed to appease the deities, and black magic is used for protection from evil and relation against one's enemies.

Guatemala is a puzzling contrast of complexity and simplicity, of misguided logic and ancient wisdom, of outer turmoil and inner peace. As developing nations do, Guatemala struggles between embracing change and adapting to globalisation, without losing its very identity in the process. However it is changing, every year more and more people adopt contemporary dress and toss aside the traditional; Spanish language dilutes the dwindling Mayan dialects; and organised religion erodes a long tradition of spiritual mysticism. To visit Guatemala is to witness the evolution of a country right before your very eyes, both natural and cultural. Its complexities will astound you; its simplicities you will adore.



## Destination - Lake Atitlan

Lake Atitlan is a natural marvel like no other, 50 square miles of deep crystal blue water surrounded by three lofty volcanoes. Formed by a volcanic cataclysm 100,000 years ago; the lake shimmers in a mountain valley, overlooked by a dozen quaint villages, whose residents proudly wear traditional dress that distinguishes each town from the next.

Boatmen eagerly ferry visitors across the lake for a glimpse into rural highland life, including the ritual surrounding the region's favourite pagan saint, Maximon, who receives offerings of cigars and alcohol in an incense-filled shrine. Despite the rustic setting of old world villages, exquisite accommodation and superb dining are available, providing a perfect setting to savour the intoxicating tranquillity of this unique natural wonder. British novelist Aldous Huxley once called this lake "the most beautiful in the world." Few, if any, could disagree.





## *Destination - Antigua*

Antigua, Guatemala is one of the most idyllic destinations in the world, with painstakingly restored Spanish colonial architecture, manicured parks, stylish hotels, superb international and traditional cuisine and a horizon shaped by three spectacular volcanoes. Nestled in a mountain valley and surrounded by evergreen forests, Antigua retains the aura of the 17th Century capital that it was, while blending modern amenities that make it an internationally appealing getaway. Walking along cobblestone streets, visitors find high-end art galleries, fascinating museums, luxurious shops with international treasures and traditional markets packed to the rafters with locally made textiles and woodcrafts. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979, with its architecture, culture and unique setting, Antigua, Guatemala, quite simply, is the most charming city in all the Americas.



# Accommodation

## WESTIN CAMINO REAL, GUATEMALA CITY

Westin Camino Real in Guatemala City offers 274 beautifully appointed classic European rooms and is located in Guatemala City's famed "Zona Viva," the capital's hub of business, shopping and entertainment, and just minutes from La Aurora International Airport.

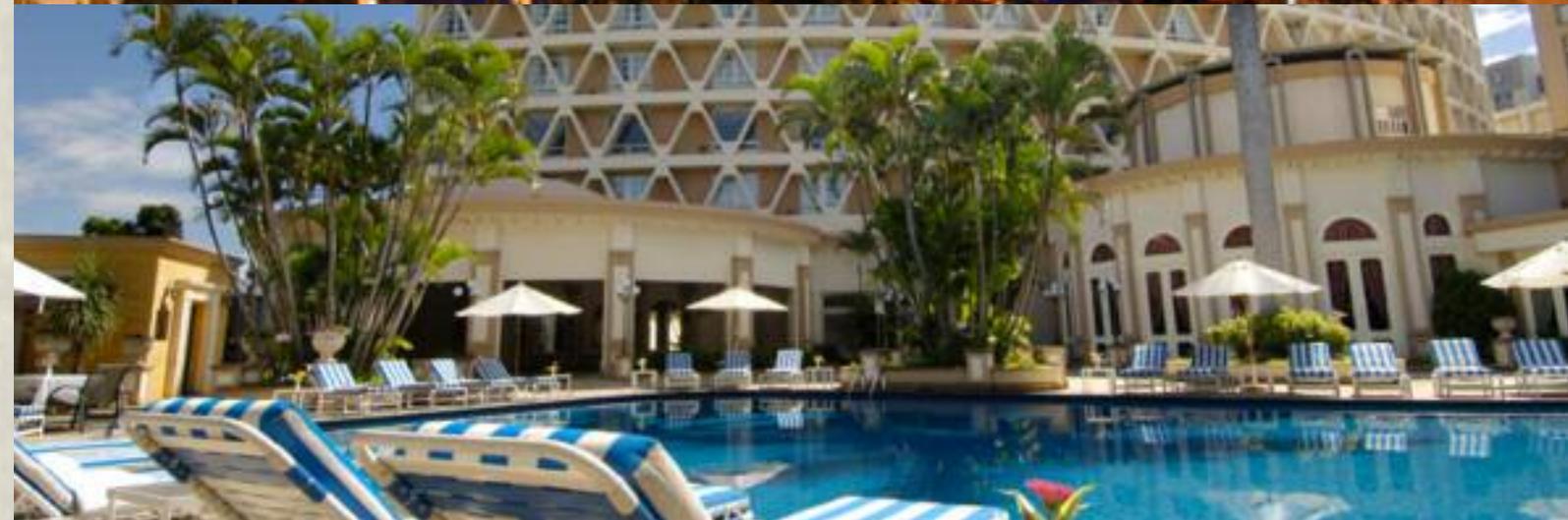
Offering a variety of services to make your stay more relaxing, guests will leave The Westin Camino Real, Guatemala feeling refreshed and reinvigorated. Spend the day by the outdoor heated pool, enjoy a game of tennis or squash, or renew your body and mind in the state-of-the-art fitness centre.

## HOTEL ATITLAN, LAKE ATITLAN

Hotel Atitlan is a beautiful getaway along the shores of Lake Atitlan, just outside the town of Panajachel. The views from Hotel Atitlan include three 10,000 ft. volcanoes - the Tolimán, Atitlan and San Pedro - towering above the lake in the southern sky. At Hotel Atitlan, travellers can enjoy award winning gardens, indoor and outdoor dining serving fine local and international cuisine, hand carved wooden furniture and gorgeous ceramic tiles. The hotel also offers a small pool, a bar and meeting and conference rooms.

## CASA SANTO DOMINIGO, ANTIGUA

Casa Santo Domingo is a beautiful hotel located in the ruins of a 17th Century Monastery in downtown Antigua. The hotel has extensive gardens, a pool, a bar, various restaurant areas and offers 125 rooms that are all equipped with a mini-bar, cable TV and safety box. There is also a small colonial museum and a traditional candle factory on the grounds.





# The Program at a Glance

Day	Morning	Lunch	Afternoon	Evening
Day 7	Breakfast at leisure at the hotel  Morning tour on the local 'Chicken Bus' to the independent Coffee Plantation	BBQ lunch	Afternoon at leisure	Farewell Gala Dinner at UNESCO monument  <i>Overnight – Casa Santo Domingo, Antigua</i>
Day 8	Breakfast at leisure at the hotel  Check out and transfer to airport for flights home	Depart for Australia	In flight	In flight
Day 9	In flight	In flight	In flight	In flight
Day 10	Arrival into Australian home ports			





## *Highlights of the Itinerary*

### **HELICOPTER AND ZIPLINE TO LAKE ATITLAN**

Guests will fly among the picturesque volcanoes and see the landscape of the Guatemala highlands from above for approximately 45 minutes. Upon arrival at the Lakes helipad, guests will continue for a Zip Line canopy activity at Reserva Natural de Atitlan. On the Ziptrek canopy, 60 meters above the ground, guests will enjoy the striking beauty in the vistas of the volcanoes, lakes and surrounding forest.

### **THE TOWNS OF LAKE ATITLAN**

Guests will board their private launches across the lake to Santiago Village where they will experience the local indigenous customs, traditions, dress and crafts and interact with locals and submerge themselves in the surrounding Maya culture. Guests will begin exploring the town and walking with their guide to find the house where the Maya God Maximon is living.

Each year a different “brotherhood” has the privilege of taking care of their God so his location changes. After visiting Maximon, guests may see local shaman performing rituals for the local people. Accompanied by their guide, guests will visit the local church, learn about the history of this very traditional town, visit the market and learn about the distinctive textiles and primitive art famous to the area. After their tour of Santiago, guests will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant near the lake shore. Following lunch, the group will make their way to their private boats and continue on a 35 minute lake tour to the nearby village of San Juan la Laguna.





## CHICHICASTENANGO MARKETS

Chichicastenango, or “Chichi” as the locals call it, is a K’iche’ Maya town perched at 2070 meters above sea level, in the highlands and was founded in around 1550 by Dominican missionaries. The site was once occupied by the Kaqchikel Maya but they left around 1470 to establish Iximché due to political unrest between themselves and the K’iche’.

On Thursdays and Sundays, the town of 76,000 inhabitants is invaded by the indigenous people from local villages all over the highlands. These villagers come to buy and sell in the market and conduct any outstanding business, like banking. In addition, many village shamans come to perform Mayan rituals on behalf of people in their community. There are many hillside Mayan altar sites where the rituals are performed and, yet more strangely, many are performed on altar slabs inside the Catholic Church.

Chichi is one of the easiest places for travellers to experience the strange way that Mayan and Catholic faiths have merged in Guatemala. Most of the women in Chichi continue to wear their traditional clothing of huipil (blouse) and corte (skirt). The unusual men’s religious outfit is worn by waiters in the two top hotels. The textile market spreads through the streets in a kaleidoscope of bright colours. The traditional back strap weaving technique used for making clothes is now employed to create household accessories and other goods.



## TIKAL NATIONAL PARK, 4X4 AND TEMPLE LUNCH

Guests will take a chartered early flight to Flores, with breakfast at lakeshore local restaurant in Flores, before a 4 x 4 self drive to Tikal. During the tour the group will explore and learn about the ancient Mayan city bursting with Mayan temples and structures, with opportunities to climb some of the tallest temples. Height was the emphasis when creating these structures as Mayans believed the higher the building the closer they were to the gods. If guests are lucky they'll spot the noisy howler monkeys, spider monkeys and exotic birds such as toucans. After the Tikal tour guests will continue to drive deep into the jungle to Uaxactun Mayan site, for a catered lunch among the breathtaking temples. Afterwards the group will drive back to Flores, board the chartered flight to Guatemala City and transfer back to Casa Santo Domingo, Antigua.

## UNESCO MONUMENT GALA DINNER

We will spoil your guests this evening with a private dinner at one of the most historical sites in Guatemala the UNESCO monument, San José el Viejo in Antigua. Upon arrival at the strikingly lit monument guests will be welcomed with a glass of champagne and a local live Cuban Jazz band. Clients can even project their own logo on the exquisite monument during the dinner if preferred.

The spectacular UNESCO Monument dates back to 1740, with the desire to build a small hermitage; it featured a carved statue of Saint Joseph. However failure to pay its debts and slowness to perform its obligations it was ordered to close in 1744. The statue of St. Joseph was removed only to be returned again in 1762 when the site reopened for religious services. Construction was finally complete in 1763.

After 1773, San José el Viejo hosted the Carmelite nuns of Santa Teresa for a while. During the nineteenth century was used for various purposes including a tannery and a barn. It's now considered one of the most charming monuments of the Americas.





DESTINATION GROUP OF COMPANIES

3&4 | 1 Hardner Road | Mount Waverley, Victoria 3149 | Australia |  
t +61 3 9544 9600 | f +61 3 9544 9035 | w destination.com.au  
Licensed Travel Agent No. 32372 | ABN 59 726 308 741 | ACN 082 833 985