



Guatemala & Belize

From Maya temples in the jungle to the Caribbean coral reef

RECOMMENDED LENGTH

16 days

DEPARTURE

Any day

you pick the dates

TRANSPORT

Private driver

and private transfers

ESTIMATED FROM, EXCL.
FLIGHT

€2,040 p.p.

My recommended private route through the heart of the Maya world. In Guatemala you discover colonial Antigua, the villages around Lake Atitlán and the temples of Tikal, deep in the jungle. Then you cross the border into Belize for the sacred cave of Actun Tunichil Muknal and the Maya city of Caracol, and you finish with three days on the island of Caye Caulker, snorkelling among sharks and rays. You travel with your own party on your own dates; the airport pickup, hotels, private drivers, the domestic flight and the boats are arranged in advance.

✓ Put together personally

✓ No group travel

✓ At your own pace

✓ Leave out or add what you like

✓ Dates completely free

✓ Eat wherever you like

Highlights

- ★ The cobbles, convent ruins and volcanoes of colonial Antigua
- ★ By private boat along the Maya villages of Lake Atitlán
- ★ Staying inside Tikal National Park and seeing the temples before the day trippers
- ★ The sacred cave of Actun Tunichil Muknal: swimming, wading and scrambling to the Maya offering chamber
- ★ The Maya city of Caracol, deep in the Belizean jungle
- ★ Snorkelling among nurse sharks and rays at Hol Chan and Shark Ray Alley
- ★ Three 'go slow' days on car-free Caye Caulker, with an optional flight over the Blue Hole

Best time to travel

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

best time to travel: advice only, you travel when you like

TRAVELLERS

Private: only your own party, from 1 traveller. No group travel, no fellow travellers you don't know.

LENGTH

Recommended: 16 days · shorter or longer is always possible

DATES

Completely flexible: you leave on the day that suits you.

Your route on the map



Map: Natural Earth (public domain) · the arcs show the order of the route, not the exact road

- 1 Guatemala City
1 night · day 1
- 2 Antigua
2 nights · day 2–3
- 3 Lake Atitlán (Jaibalito)
2 nights · day 4–5
- 4 Flores
1 night · day 6
- 5 Tikal
2 nights · day 7–8
- 6 San Ignacio
3 nights · day 9–11
- 7 Caye Caulker
3 nights · day 12–14
- ◇ Belize City airport day 15

overland, arrow = direction of travel flight
day trip airport / connection



DAY 5 Lake Atitlán and its volcanoes



DAY 11 Caana, the 'Sky Palace' of the Maya city of Caracol

My recommended route

This is the route as I put it together for you. It is a starting point, not a fixed programme: leave out what doesn't appeal to you, add what you would like to do and travel at your own pace. Everything below is arranged for you in advance. Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

DAY 1 **Arrival in Guatemala City** GUATEMALA-STAD

Flight from Brussels with one connection, usually in Madrid, to Guatemala City. Your driver is waiting in the arrivals hall of La Aurora airport with a name sign and takes you in fifteen minutes to your hotel in Zone 10, the capital's safe hotel and restaurant district. Your travel documents and eSIM instructions are ready for you.

DAY 2 **Guatemala City and on to Antigua** ANTIGUA ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning a short visit of the capital with your driver: the main square with the cathedral and the National Palace, and the covered central market. Your driver drops you off and collects you at each stop. After lunch you drive to Antigua in an hour to an hour and a half, depending on traffic. The rest of the afternoon is free: time for the pool and garden of your hotel.

DAY 3 **Colonial Antigua** ANTIGUA ♦ BREAKFAST

Walk through the former capital of Spanish Central America, a UNESCO World Heritage site at the foot of three volcanoes: the yellow Santa Catalina arch, La Merced church, the main square and the ruins of convents that collapsed in the 1773 earthquake. Free afternoon. If you like, visit a coffee farm or take a chocolate workshop.



Santa Catalina Arch in Antigua with Volcán de Agua

DAY 4 **Via Iximché to Lake Atitlán** ATITLÁNMEER (JAIBALITO) ♦ BREAKFAST

After breakfast your driver takes you up into the highlands. After about an hour and a half you stop at Iximché, capital of the Kaqchikel Maya and in 1524 briefly the first Spanish capital of Guatemala. Maya ceremonies are still held here. Then on to Panajachel, on the shore of Lake Atitlán. Your hotel clings to the rocks near the hamlet of Jaibalito and can only be reached by boat: a private boat takes you there in twenty minutes, with views of three volcanoes. We plan the crossing before late afternoon, when the wind gets up.

DAY 5 **The villages around Lake Atitlán** ATITLÁNMEER (JAIBALITO) ♦ BREAKFAST

A day on the water with a private boat. In San Juan La Laguna you visit a women's weaving cooperative that works with natural dyes, in Santiago Atitlán the church and the folk saint Maximón. You leave in the morning, while the lake is still flat, and are back in the afternoon for a swim in the lake or a book on your terrace.

DAY 6**Back to the capital and flight to Flores** FLORES • BREAKFAST

A travel day. In the morning you take the boat back to Panajachel, where your driver is waiting for the three-and-a-half to four-hour drive to Guatemala City airport. We allow plenty of margin, because traffic around the capital is unpredictable. In the late afternoon you fly in one hour to Flores, in the Petén lowlands. A driver takes you in ten minutes to your hotel on Lake Petén Itzá, facing the little island of Flores.

DAY 7**Flores and on to Tikal** TIKAL • BREAKFAST

In the morning you wander at your own pace through Flores, a village of colourful houses and cobbles that forms a small island in the lake; you cross the causeway on foot or by tuk-tuk. After lunch your driver takes you to Tikal in about an hour and a half. You stay inside the national park itself, within walking distance of the temples. Towards evening you hear the howler monkeys.



The island town of Flores in Lake Petén Itzá

DAY 8**A full day at Tikal** TIKAL • BREAKFAST

You set off early from your lodge, ahead of the heat and of the day trippers from Flores and Belize. You walk through the jungle to the Gran Plaza with the Temple of the Great Jaguar, climb Temple IV for the view over the canopy and see spider monkeys, toucans and coatis along the way. Free afternoon by the pool, or back into the park. Optional: sunrise on Temple IV (separate ticket; before 6 am you may only enter the park with a licensed guide).

DAY 9**Across the border to San Ignacio (Belize)** SAN IGNACIO • BREAKFAST

Your Guatemalan driver takes you to the border at Melchor de Mencos in about two hours. You have your passport stamped at Guatemalan immigration, walk with your luggage to the Belizean side and get your entry stamp there; allow half an hour to an hour. Your Belizean driver is waiting on the other side for the twenty-minute drive to San Ignacio. In the afternoon you can visit the small Maya site of Cahal Pech, right next to your hotel, or the market in town.

DAY 10**The sacred cave of Actun Tunichil Muknal** SAN IGNACIO • BREAKFAST • LUNCH

Today you enter the ATM cave, which is only allowed with a specially licensed guide: the sacred cave where the Maya made offerings to their gods. After a 45-minute jungle walk with three river crossings you swim into the cave, then wade and scramble to the great chamber with pottery and skeletons, including the 'Crystal Maiden'. You go in a small party of at most six per guide; helmet, lamp and lunch are included. Cameras and phones are banned inside the cave. You need to be able to swim and be reasonably fit.

DAY 11**The Maya city of Caracol** SAN IGNACIO • BREAKFAST • LUNCH

Day trip to Caracol, deep in the Chiquibul forest, about two hours' drive from San Ignacio. More people once lived here than live in Belize City today, and the city defeated Tikal in 562. You climb Caana, the 43-metre 'sky palace', still one of the tallest structures in the country, and often have the site almost to yourself. On the way back you cool off in the natural Rio On pools and stop at Rio Frio cave.

DAY 12**To Caye Caulker** CAYE CAULKER • BREAKFAST

Your driver takes you right across Belize in about two hours to the water-taxi terminal in Belize City. The boat takes you in 45 minutes to Caye Caulker, a car-free island whose motto is 'go slow'. Your hotel is on the seafront, within walking distance of the pier. The rest of the day: sand between your toes.



Caye Caulker and The Split from the air

DAY 13**Snorkelling with sharks and rays** CAYE CAULKER • BREAKFAST • LUNCH

Full-day boat trip to the Belize Barrier Reef, with a licensed guide (required by law in the marine reserve), the largest coral reef in the northern hemisphere. In the Hol Chan marine reserve you snorkel through a channel full of fish and turtles, at Shark Ray Alley among (harmless) nurse sharks and stingrays. Snorkel gear, park fee and lunch are included.

DAY 14 **Free day on the island** CAYE CAULKER ♦ BREAKFAST

A day without a programme: swimming at The Split, kayaking, looking for manatees or simply a hammock. Optional (not included): a one-hour scenic flight over the Great Blue Hole and the reef. It departs from the island itself and costs roughly US\$240–260 per person; tell us in advance, because seats are limited and the flight depends on the weather.

DAY 15 **To Belize City and flight home** AAN BOORD ♦ BREAKFAST

In the morning you take the water taxi to Belize City, where a driver meets you and takes you to the international airport in half an hour. Flights towards Europe leave around midday or in the early afternoon and almost always go via a US airport such as Miami, Houston or Atlanta. You need an ESTA for that, even if you only change planes. In the evening you fly on to Europe.

DAY 16 **Arrival in Brussels**

Arrival in Brussels during the day, after a connection. A few days later I call you to hear how it went.

What I arrange for you

1 Airport pickup

At La Aurora airport in Guatemala City your driver waits in the arrivals hall with a name sign; he tracks your flight and also waits if it is delayed. The drive to your hotel in Zone 10 takes 10 to 15 minutes. In Flores a driver is also waiting after your domestic flight. On the last day a driver meets you at the water-taxi terminal in Belize City and drops you at departures at the international airport.

2 Hotels

Every night is booked and confirmed in advance, at the level you choose: Budget, Comfort or Premium. Prefer another hotel? I change it.

3 Transport

A private driver and private transfers for the whole route, with domestic flights, trains and boats where they make sense. All booked in advance.

4 Activities, at your pace

The activities and entrance tickets on the route. No guide or group travels with you: you set the pace, and anything you would rather skip, you simply leave out.

5 Eat wherever you like

Breakfast is included, as are the meals at remote camps and lodges where there is no alternative. For the rest I give you my restaurant tips, but you are completely free to choose where you eat. I never send you somewhere because it earns me something.

Estimated prices per person

PER PERSON, BASED ON 2 TRAVELLERS, EXCL. INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT

ACCOMMODATION LEVEL	Self-drive rental car, everything pre-booked	Private driver private transfers and driver
Budget simple, clean and well located	—	€2,040 p.p.
Comfort characterful mid-range	—	€2,680 p.p.
Premium the best addresses on the ground	—	€4,140 p.p.

WITH 4 TRAVELLERS approx. 12% off per person: you share the car and driver. E.g. Comfort, private driver: approx. €2,360 p.p.

TRAVELLING SOLO supplement of approx. 64%: you carry the room and transport alone. E.g. Comfort, private driver: approx. €4,395 p.p.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT I book your flight as part of your trip; the flight price for your dates is in your personal quote. Flight Brussels–Guatemala City, returning from Belize City, not included: allow about € 850–1,300 p.p. depending on the month (February is usually the cheapest). I find you the best flight with your quote.

SELF-DRIVE: NOT OFFERED ON THIS ROUTE

We do not offer self-drive on this route. The Belgian FPS Foreign Affairs advises against renting a car in Guatemala and prefers transport with a driver: driving behaviour is unpredictable, road blockades are frequent and driving after dark is strongly discouraged. In addition, a Guatemalan rental car may not cross the border into Belize and cannot be returned there. You fly from the capital to Flores, your hotel on Lake Atitlán can only be reached by boat and there are no cars on Caye Caulker. You would use a rental car for a few days at most. If you would still like to drive yourself in Belize, around San Ignacio, we look into it on request.

WITH A PRIVATE DRIVER

You travel with private drivers per region: one for Guatemala City, Antigua and Lake Atitlán, one in Petén for Flores, Tikal and the drive to the border, and a Belizean driver from the border to Belize City. They collect you at your hotel, the airport or the pier at the time stated in your travel documents, and drive in daylight only. At the Melchor de Mencos border you say goodbye to your Guatemalan driver, walk through the two immigration posts and find your Belizean driver waiting on the other side. On Lake Atitlán you travel by private boat, to Caye Caulker by water taxi. Drivers in Guatemala speak Spanish, in Belize English; I can always interpret over WhatsApp.

ESTIMATED PRICES Estimated prices: per person, based on 2 travellers sharing a room, excl. international flight, estimated from desk research (2027 price level). The binding price is the one in your personal proposal and booking confirmation.

Estimated price. In high season the price can be higher, in low season lower; your exact price is in your personal quote.

Three accommodation levels

Budget

Simple, well-reviewed hotels and guesthouses with private bathroom: a small hotel in Zone 10 or 13 of Guatemala City, a colonial guesthouse in Antigua, a simple room on Lake Atitlán, a small hotel on Flores island, the simplest rooms inside Tikal park (e.g. Jaguar Inn or the hostel wing of the Jungle Lodge, sometimes with shared bathroom), a guesthouse in San Ignacio and a small hotel on Caye Caulker, a few streets from the sea.

Comfort

The hotels from my own trip (founder's picks), or similar: Hilton Guatemala City in Zone 10, Hotel Palacio de Doña Beatriz with garden and pool in Antigua, Hotel La Casa del Mundo on the rocks above Lake Atitlán (boat access only, many steps), Hotel Casona del Lago on the lake in Flores, the Jungle Lodge inside Tikal park, Cahal Pech Village Resort on the hill above San Ignacio and Weezie's Ocean Front Hotel on Caye Caulker.

Premium

The best hotels on the route: a five-star hotel in Zone 10, a top historic hotel in Antigua (e.g. in a former convent), a boutique hotel with volcano views on Lake Atitlán, a boutique hotel near Flores, a suite at the Jungle Lodge in Tikal, a jungle lodge or resort near San Ignacio and a seafront suite on Caye Caulker (e.g. at Weezie's, founder's pick). Honestly: there is no true luxury inside Tikal park or on Caye Caulker; there you get the best room available. If you want a luxury beach resort, we swap Caye Caulker for Ambergris Caye.

Possible guided moments

Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

- ✦ ATM cave: only accessible with a specially licensed guide (rule of Belize's Institute of Archaeology); always included
- ✦ Guatemala City, Antigua and Iximché: a local guide for the city or the Maya site
- ✦ Hol Chan: snorkelling in the marine reserve is by law only allowed with a licensed guide; included in your snorkelling trip
- ✦ Lake Atitlán: a local guide in San Juan La Laguna and Santiago Atitlán
- ✦ Tikal: a licensed private guide for the temples (compulsory if you choose sunrise)
- ✦ Caracol: a private guide instead of a small group
- ✦ Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

Ideas to adapt the route

- ➔ Shorter (11–13 days): skip the visit of the capital, and stay two nights in San Ignacio and two on Caye Caulker
- ➔ The Maya site of Yaxhá, on a lagoon, on the way from Tikal to the border
- ➔ An easier day 6: overnight in Guatemala City and take an early flight to Flores the next morning
- ➔ Not keen on the ATM cave? Then Barton Creek cave by canoe or the Maya site of Xunantunich
- ➔ Chichicastenango market (Thursdays and Sundays) as an extra day between Antigua and Lake Atitlán
- ➔ Prefer a beach resort or diving: Ambergris Caye instead of Caye Caulker, or a few extra days in Placencia
- ➔ Pacaya volcano from Antigua (compulsory with a local guide), if volcanic activity allows

Included

- ✓ 14 nights at the comfort level of your choice (Budget, Comfort or Premium), double room with breakfast
- ✓ Airport pickup in Guatemala City and transfer to your first hotel
- ✓ Private drivers and private transfers along the whole route in Guatemala and Belize, up to and including the drop-off at Belize City airport
- ✓ Domestic flight Guatemala City–Flores, with checked luggage
- ✓ Private boats on Lake Atitlán and the water taxi to and from Caye Caulker
- ✓ Assistance at the border crossing: a driver on each side of the border at Melchor de Mencos
- ✓ Day trips to the ATM cave (by law only with a licensed guide), Caracol and the reef (snorkelling at Hol Chan by law only with a licensed guide)
- ✓ All listed entrance and park fees (incl. Tikal, ATM cave, Caracol and Hol Chan marine reserve), with lunch on the day trips to the ATM cave, Caracol and the reef

Not included

- International flight (optional add-on; allow approx. €850–1,300 pp, depending on the month)
- ESTA for the connection in the United States on the way home (approx. US\$40, applied for online by yourself)
- Other meals and drinks (you get my restaurant recommendations)
- Optional activities: scenic flight over the Blue Hole (approx. US\$240–260 p.p.), sunrise at Tikal (compulsory with a guide), coffee or chocolate visit in Antigua, diving
- Tips for drivers, skippers and guides
- Travel and cancellation insurance
- Personal expenses

Practical information

VISA (BELGIAN CITIZENS)

No visa required for Guatemala (up to 90 days) or Belize (up to 30 days). Passport valid for at least 6 months on arrival in Guatemala. Guatemala requires a free online customs declaration (Declaración Jurada Regional del Viajero) before arrival and before departure. Belize may ask for proof of onward travel; the departure tax when leaving by air (approx. US\$73.50) is normally included in your air ticket. For the connection in the US on the way home you need an ESTA.

HEALTH

No mandatory vaccinations when arriving from Belgium. Hepatitis A recommended and routine vaccines (tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis, polio, measles) up to date; measles is circulating in both countries. Dengue, chikungunya and Zika occur: protect against mosquitoes. Malaria risk is low on this route (according to Wanda, mosquito protection is sufficient). Consult a travel clinic (ITG/Wanda).

CURRENCY & PAYMENT

Guatemala: quetzal (GTQ). Belize: Belize dollar (BZD), pegged to the US dollar (2 BZD = 1 USD); US dollars are accepted everywhere in Belize.

FLIGHT TIME FROM BRUSSELS

No direct flight; outbound approx. 15–17 hours via Madrid to Guatemala City, return approx. 17–22 hours from Belize City via a US airport.

TIME DIFFERENCE

UTC-6 in both countries: 7 hours behind Belgium in winter, 8 hours in summer.

LANGUAGE

Guatemala: Spanish and more than twenty Maya languages. Belize: English (official language), Kriol and Spanish.

MEALS

Breakfast is included every day, as is lunch on the day trips to the ATM cave, Caracol and the reef, where there is no alternative. For the other meals you get my restaurant recommendations, but you are completely free to choose where and when you eat: I never steer you to expensive restaurants in return for a commission.

GUIDES

By default you travel without a guide. Prefer a guide? I can add a local guide to any activity.

As of September 2026 — check diplomatie.belgium.be (travel advice) and wanda.be (health) before you travel.

Travelling responsibly

If you take a guide, it is a local, licensed guide from the region, from the Kaqchikel and Tz'utujil villages around Lake Atitlán to the Maya guides of San Ignacio. You stay in small locally owned hotels. In San Juan La Laguna you buy directly from the women's weaving cooperatives. At Tikal you stay inside the park itself, so you walk to the temples without extra drives. Strict rules apply in the ATM cave (small parties, no cameras, socks only in the offering chamber) and on the reef we choose skippers who follow the marine reserve rules: touch nothing, never stand on coral, reef-safe sunscreen. Park fees support the management of Tikal, Caracol and Hol Chan. Flight CO₂ offsetting is available.



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Put together personally by Yari, down to the last detail. — Yari Steennot

No group travel and no fixed dates: you travel privately, at your own pace. Leave out what doesn't appeal to you, add what you like. I give you my restaurant tips, but you choose freely where you eat: nobody sends you to expensive restaurants for a commission.

MY CONTACT ON THE GROUND: [contact name]

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COVER Temple I and the Gran Plaza, Tikal — Photo: Ralf Steinberger from Milan, Berlin + Munich, Italy + Germany · CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0) · [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Archaeological_Maya_city_Tikal_in_Guatemala_-_Central_place_with_temples_palaces_stelae_and_stones_to_offer_sacrifices_to_the_gods_\(26312777939\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Archaeological_Maya_city_Tikal_in_Guatemala_-_Central_place_with_temples_palaces_stelae_and_stones_to_offer_sacrifices_to_the_gods_(26312777939).jpg) · *cropped, resized*

DAY 3 Santa Catalina Arch in Antigua with Volcán de Agua — Photo: Chad Davis · CC BY-SA 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Santa_Catalina_Arch_-_Antigua_Guatemala_Feb_2020.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 5 Lake Atitlán and its volcanoes — Photo: Francisco Anzola · CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0) · [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lake_Atitalan_and_San_Pedro_\(3747182120\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lake_Atitalan_and_San_Pedro_(3747182120).jpg) · *cropped, resized*

ESTIMATED PRICES

Estimated prices: per person, based on 2 travellers sharing a room, excl. international flight, estimated from desk research (2027 price level). The binding price is the one in your personal proposal and booking confirmation. Ask for a no-obligation personal intake call or a proposal. Other dates, more or fewer days, something left out or added? Everything can be adapted.

This trip is a package under the Belgian Act of 21 November 2017 on the sale of package travel, linked travel arrangements and travel services. Before you sign, you receive the standard information form and our travel conditions. Steennot Travels is insured against insolvency with [insurer, address, policy number — to be completed]: in case of insolvency, payments are refunded and, where transport is included, repatriation is guaranteed. All prices are indicative estimates; the binding price is the one in your booking confirmation.

DAY 7 The island town of Flores in Lake Petén Itzá — Photo: Juan Francisco · CC BY-SA 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flores_Island.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 11 Caana, the 'Sky Palace' of the Maya city of Caracol — Photo: Dennis G. Jarvis · CC BY-SA 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0) · commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caana_Caracol.jpg · *cropped, resized*

DAY 12 Caye Caulker and The Split from the air — Photo: dronepicr · CC BY 2.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0) · [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caye_Caulker_Belize_aerial_\(20688990128\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caye_Caulker_Belize_aerial_(20688990128).jpg) · *cropped, resized*