


QTRAVEL

TRAVEL AND TOURISM MAGAZINE / Nº50



GUATEMALA CITY
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MAYAN ART
ANTIGUA GUATEMALA
TIKAL NATIONAL PARK
FLORES ISLAND
PACAYA VOLCANO N.P.
EL BARRETAL FARM

GUATEMALA

THE ESSENCE OF CENTRAL AMERICA



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[04] GUATEMALA CITY

[19] NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MAYAN ART

[25] ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

[40] FLIGHT TO "MUNDO MAYA"

[42] TIKAL NATIONAL PARK

[58] FLORES ISLAND

[64] PACAYA VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK

[70] EL BARRETAL FARM



Guatemala is a destination that captures the essence of Central America. **Guatemala City**, modern and dynamic, offers a fascinating contrast to the history that surrounds it. Antigua Guatemala, with its majestic colonial ruins and cobblestone streets, is a journey into the past that leaves no one indifferent. In the north, **Tikal National Park** reveals the grandeur of the Mayan civilization with its towering pyramids surrounded by jungle. **Flores**

Island, a jewel on **Lake Petén Itzá**, is the perfect place to enjoy a magical sunset. Finally, **Pacaya Volcano National Park** invites adventurers to walk on solidified lava and take in the breathtaking views of the volcanic landscape.

Guatemala is a country where history, nature, and culture intertwine in every corner — all that's left is to enjoy it as much as we did.

David Bigorra

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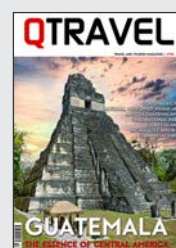
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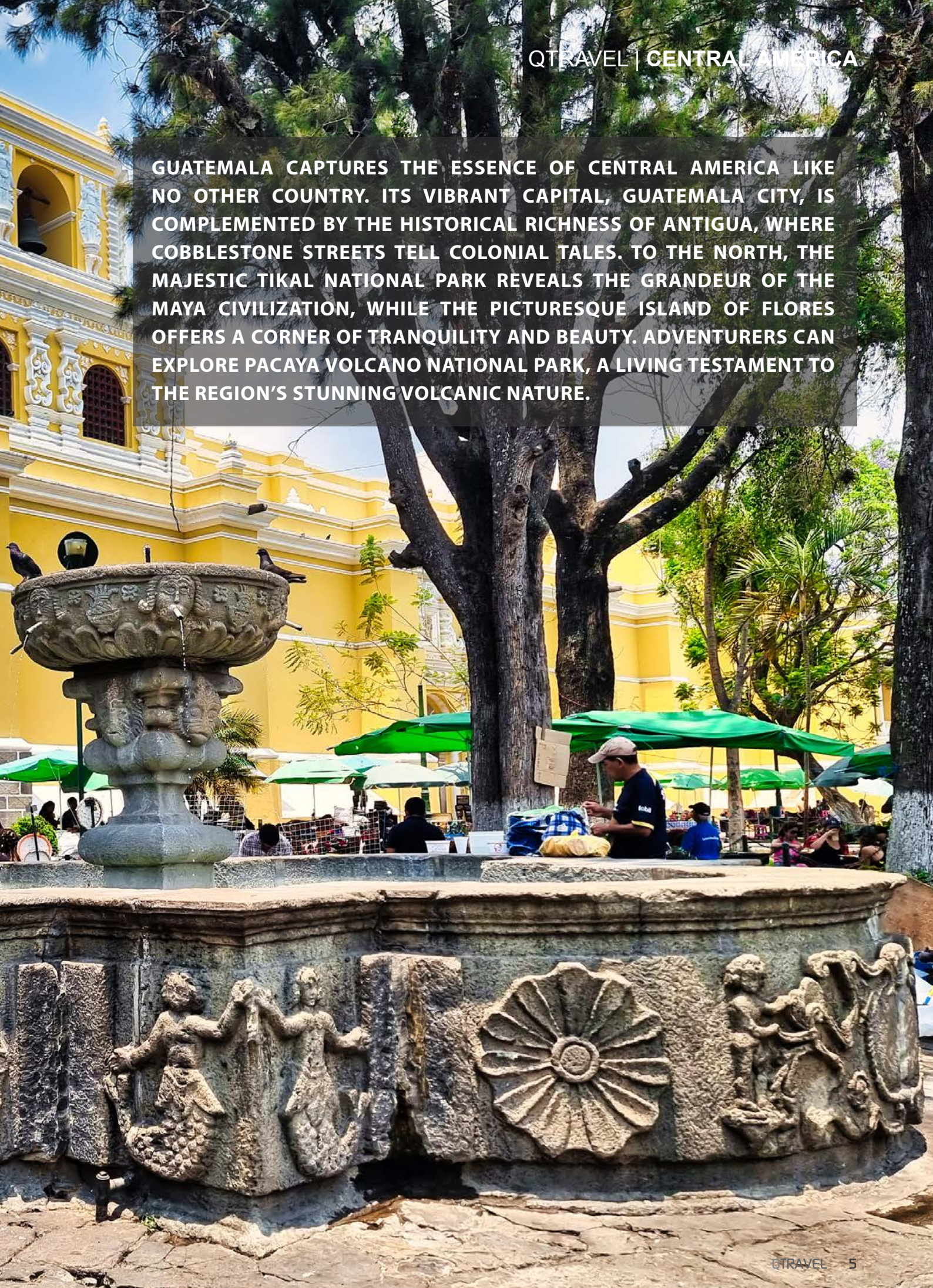
A vibrant yellow colonial church with intricate white stucco carvings and a large stone fountain in the foreground. The church features multiple levels of ornate carvings, including columns and arches. A large stone fountain with a circular stone basin and a central stone sculpture is in the foreground. People are walking around the church grounds. The sky is blue with some clouds.

GUATEMALA

THE ESSENCE OF CENTRAL AMERICA

Text by David Bigorra – Photography by Daniel Herrera and David Bigorra

GUATEMALA CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF CENTRAL AMERICA LIKE NO OTHER COUNTRY. ITS VIBRANT CAPITAL, GUATEMALA CITY, IS COMPLEMENTED BY THE HISTORICAL RICHNESS OF ANTIGUA, WHERE COBBLESTONE STREETS TELL COLONIAL TALES. TO THE NORTH, THE MAJESTIC TIKAL NATIONAL PARK REVEALS THE GRANDEUR OF THE MAYA CIVILIZATION, WHILE THE PICTURESQUE ISLAND OF FLORES OFFERS A CORNER OF TRANQUILITY AND BEAUTY. ADVENTURERS CAN EXPLORE PACAYA VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK, A LIVING TESTAMENT TO THE REGION'S STUNNING VOLCANIC NATURE.





Metropolitan Cathedral in Guatemala City at night.

GUATEMALA CITY

Guatemala City, also known as “Guate” by the locals, is a vibrant metropolis that blends its rich history with modernity, offering visitors a variety of attractions ranging from majestic historical buildings to charming artisan markets. Throughout this article, we will explore some of the most iconic and appealing sites that make Guatemala City a fascinating destination for travelers.

PLAZA BERLÍN: AN UNMATCHED VIEWPOINT

Plaza Berlín is located in Zone 13 of **Guatemala City** and is one of the capital's most iconic public spaces. This spot is not only a beautiful park with green areas and spaces for recreation, but it also offers an impressive panoramic view of the **Pacaya Volcano** and the other volcanoes surrounding the city.

The name of the plaza pays homage to



From Berlin Plaza, you can get excellent panoramic views of the volcanoes surrounding the city.

the German capital, and it features three original fragments of the Berlin Wall, donated by the German government.

These fragments serve as a poignant reminder of the past and a symbol of freedom and reunification. Visitors can stroll through the lush gardens, enjoy a picnic, or simply admire the stunning view from the lookout points, especially at sunset, when the sky is painted in warm colors.

Additionally, the plaza is an ideal space for family activities and cultural events, hosting concerts and fairs that strengthen the community.

Its accessible design, lush greenery, and tranquil atmosphere make **Plaza Berlín** a perfect place for relaxation and contemplation, serving as a gathering point that invites people to enjoy the natural beauty, cultural richness, and history of **Guatemala**.



The Church of Our Lady of Anguish Yurrita is one of the most eclectic temples in the city.

OUR LADY OF SORROWS YURRITA: AN ECLECTIC GEM

Our Lady of Sorrows Yurrita Church, popularly known as “Yurrita,” is one of the most unique and fascinating temples in Guatemala City. Located in Zone 9, this church was built between 1927 and 1941 by the Yurrita family, of Spanish origin, as a way to thank the Virgin Mary for her protection during the eruption of the Santa María Volcano in 1902.

The architecture of Yurrita is eclectic, combining elements of Gothic Revival, Mudéjar, Byzantine, and Baroque styles, making it a one-of-a-kind piece within the city’s urban landscape.

The intricate ornamental details on its facade, as well as its richly decorated interior, make this stunning church a must-visit for enthusiasts of architecture and religious history. A unique place to visit in Guatemala City.



Despite its busy location, the Post Office Arch is a highly sought-after tourist spot in Guatemala.

ARCO DE CORREOS: A SYMBOL OF HISTORY

Arco de Correos, located on 7th Avenue, is one of the city's most recognized monuments. This impressive arch connects two buildings that once housed the postal and telegraph offices, constructed in the early 20th century. With its neoclassical design, the arch has witnessed significant historical events and is a symbol of the city's rich architectural heritage.

Walking under the **Arco de Correos**, visitors can feel history come alive at every turn while observing the intricate details of the historic structure and enjoying the vibrant urban life that surrounds it. This landmark is a point of reference for locals and a prime photo spot for tourists looking to capture the unique essence of the city. Additionally, its proximity to other historic monuments and charming cafes makes it an ideal starting point for exploring the city.



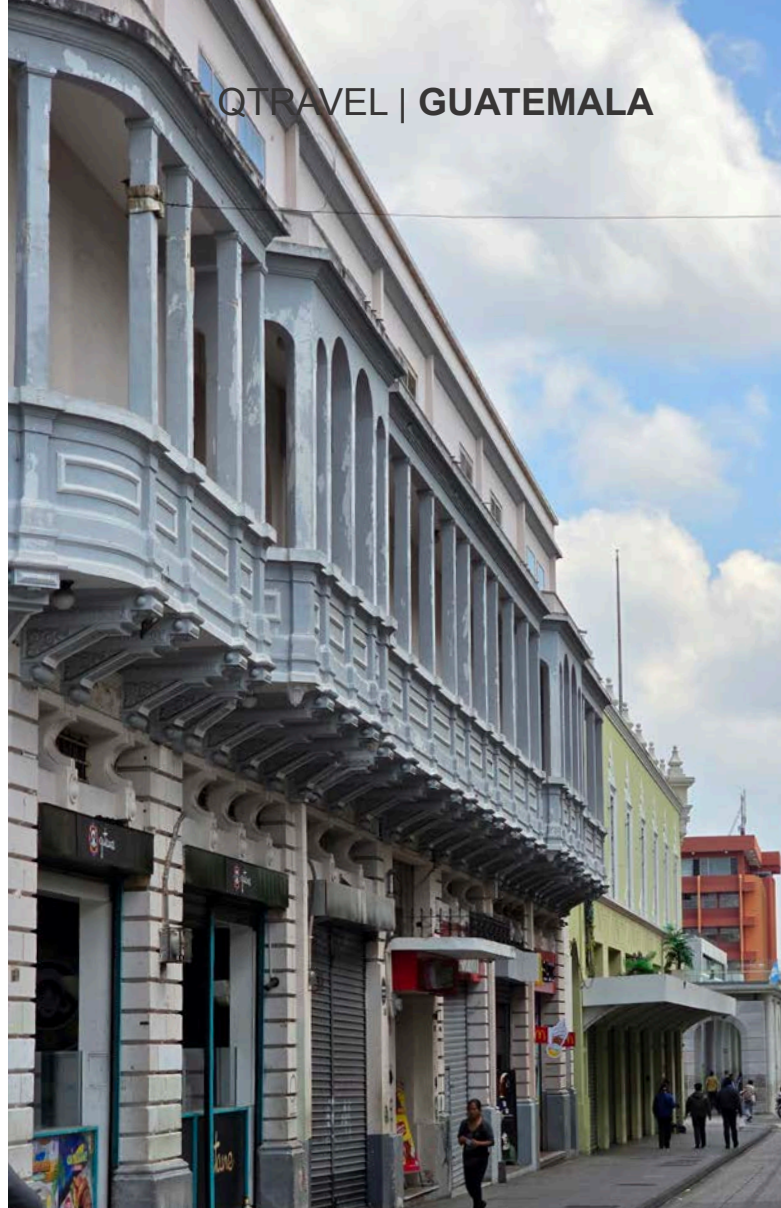
The former Lux Theater, built in Art Deco style, is now a cultural center sponsored by Spain.

TEATRO LUX: A CULTURAL THEATER OF SPAIN

Teatro Lux, located on 6th Avenue, is one of the most important and historically significant theaters in Guatemala City. Inaugurated in 1936, this theater has been a cornerstone of the city's culture, offering a wide range of performances from classic plays to art films and cultural events.

Teatro Lux is managed by the Spanish

Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), providing a rich and diverse cultural program that promotes art and culture in its various forms. The historic building itself is an architectural gem with Art Deco elements, making it a draw for both culture enthusiasts and architecture lovers. Additionally, the theater has been the venue for significant artistic collaborations and groundbreaking performances in Guatemala's vibrant cultural life.



An example of early 20th-century architecture in downtown Guatemala.

ARCHITECTURE OF 6TH AVENUE

6th Avenue, also known as Paseo de la Sexta, is one of the main thoroughfares in the historic center of Guatemala City. This charming pedestrian avenue is renowned for its rich architecture, ranging from Neoclassical to Art Deco and Modernist styles.

Visitors can admire a series of beautifully preserved historic buildings, many of

which have been meticulously restored to maintain their original splendor. Notable buildings include the Edificio Engel, Edificio El Centro, and Edificio Mario Camposeco, which reflect the architectural grandeur of the early 20th century.

6th Avenue is not only a place to admire architecture but also a vibrant hub where daily life, commerce, and urban culture converge, with numerous cafés, shops, and galleries waiting to be explored.



Guatemala still retains modernist architecture, such as the San Martín Building.

SAN MARTÍN BUILDING

The **San Martín building**, located at 6th Avenue and 9th Street, is another notable example of modern architecture in Guatemala City. Built in 1955, this building is a clear representation of the Modernist style that began to gain popularity in the latter half of the 20th century. Its straight, functional lines, along with its glass and steel façade, set it apart within the urban landscape.

The building houses a variety of offices and businesses, and its design has been recognized as a landmark of Guatemalan Modernism. For those interested in the architectural evolution of the city, this building is a must-see during a tour of the historic center, where other notable examples from the era can also be appreciated. Additionally, its proximity to important cultural landmarks makes it an ideal spot to enjoy the vibrant urban life.



The neoclassical Paris Building, constructed in 1925, was a large European-style department store.

PARÍS BUILDING: EUROPEAN ELEGANCE

Located at the intersection of 6th Avenue and 10th Street, **París Building** is an iconic symbol of elegance and refinement in Guatemala City. This impressive building, designed in the Neoclassical style, was constructed in 1925 and initially housed large department stores and luxury boutiques, earning it the nickname ***"Paris in Guatemala."*** Its magnificent façade, adorned with Corinthian columns

and ornate balconies, beautifully evokes the grandeur of European architecture in the heart of the city.

Today, **París Building** remains a symbol of Guatemala's rich commercial and architectural history, attracting attention from both locals and tourists. Its cultural legacy, along with its architectural beauty, makes it a fascinating point of interest that highlights the historical heritage of the Guatemalan capital.



"El Portal" has witnessed key moments in the country's history, including visits from "Che" Guevara and Fidel Castro.

RESTAURANT EL PORTAL: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

Bar and Restaurant El Portal, founded in 1932, is one of the oldest and most iconic establishments in Guatemala City. Located on 9th Street, near Plaza de la Constitución, this bar has witnessed the political and social history of the country, frequented by notable figures such as Che Guevara and Fidel Castro during their stay in Guatemala. El Portal retains

its classic style and nostalgic atmosphere, transporting visitors to a bygone era. The venue is perfect for enjoying a delicious traditional Guatemalan meal or a refreshing drink at its wooden bar. With decor that reflects the rich cultural heritage of the country, El Portal has become an ideal space for those wishing to immerse themselves in the living history of the city and experience a genuine piece of its past while enjoying a cozy environment.



Fountain in the Plaza de la Constitución.

PLAZA DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN

Plaza de la Constitución square, also known as Parque Central, is the heart of Guatemala City and the epicenter of its civic and cultural life. Surrounded by some of the city's most important buildings, such as the National Palace of Culture and the Metropolitan Cathedral, this plaza is a gathering place for Guatemalans and an ideal starting point for exploring the historic center.

The plaza is an expansive open space of 27,000 square meters where demonstrations, cultural events, and civic activities of all kinds are held. Visitors can enjoy a leisurely stroll through its beautifully landscaped gardens, admire the ornate fountains and impressive sculptures, or simply sit and rest while observing the vibrant bustling city life. Plaza de la Constitución is undoubtedly the perfect place to feel the rhythm of Guatemalan life.



Main facade of the National Palace of Culture.

NATIONAL PALACE OF CULTURE

The National Palace of Culture, also known simply as the National Palace, is one of the most iconic buildings in Guatemala City. Constructed between 1939 and 1943 during the presidency of Jorge Ubico, this majestic building is a prime example of the Neocolonial style and symbolizes the rich history and identity of the country. Besides its architectural significance, it represents

the enduring character of the Guatemalan people over the years. The palace houses important government offices and serves as the venue for significant official events. Its interior is equally impressive, with rooms adorned with stunning murals, intricate stained glass, and ornamental details that narrate the vibrant history of Guatemala. Tourists can take guided tours to explore its grand spaces and learn about the political and cultural history of the country.



Metropolitan Cathedral of Santiago de Guatemala.

METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL

The **Metropolitan Cathedral of Santiago de Guatemala** stands as a lasting symbol of Guatemalan faith and history. Located in the heart of Guatemala City, its construction, which began in 1782 and was completed in 1815, reflects the architectural mastery of the colonial era. The imposing Neoclassical façade, majestic and grand, combines Baroque and Classical elements, offering

a harmonious view that stands out distinctly in the urban environment.

Inside, the chapels and ornate altars are silent witnesses to the deep devotion that has endured over the centuries. The finely crafted ornamental details invite a profound contemplation of Guatemala's rich spiritual and cultural wealth, making this revered temple a place of deep reverence and national pride.



At the Central Market, you can get a feel for the city's pulse.

CENTRAL AND ARTISAN MARKETS

Central Market is one of the most authentic places the city has to offer. This underground market is a maze of stalls selling everything from fresh fruits and vegetables to clothing, electronics, and souvenirs. It is the ideal place to immerse oneself in the daily life of Guatemalans and experience the bustling atmosphere typical of a Latin American market.

Adjacent to Central Market, the Artisan Market is a paradise for art and Guatemalan culture enthusiasts.

Here, visitors can find a wide variety of local crafts, including Mayan textiles, ceramics, jade jewelry, masks, and leather goods. Each piece reflects the traditions and skills of Guatemala's various indigenous peoples, making the market a perfect place to purchase a memorable keepsake.



The National Museum of Maya Art in Guatemala preserves pieces of incalculable value.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MAYA ART

The **National Museum of Maya Art** is one of Guatemala's most important cultural treasures and a must-visit for anyone deeply interested in Maya history and civilization. This museum houses one of the world's most comprehensive and valuable collections of Maya artifacts. Through its detailed exhibits, visitors can explore the evolution of the Maya civilization, from its origins to its peak, and discover the

profound legacy of one of Mesoamerica's most influential cultures.

The museum boasts an impressive collection spanning from the Preclassic period (2000 BC - 250 AD) to the Postclassic period (900 AD - 1500 AD), reflecting the cultural and artistic richness of the Maya. The collection is organized chronologically and thematically, allowing visitors to journey through the history of this fascinating civilization.



Sandstone monoliths with hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Among the most notable pieces are the stone stelae, vertical monuments carved with hieroglyphic inscriptions and representations of Maya rulers and deities. These stelae are not only masterpieces of sculptural art but also provide valuable information about the political and social history of the Maya city-states.

Another key piece is the **Throne of Piedras Negras**, an impressive stone

throne adorned with elaborate reliefs depicting scenes from the Maya court. This throne was used by the nobility and is an exceptional example of Maya ceremonial art and architecture.

Maya ceramics are a crucial part of the museum's collection. These pieces offer a detailed view of daily life, religion, and Maya cosmology. Among the most notable ceramics are the **polychrome cylindrical vessels**, decorated with





Incense vessels.

mythological and ritual scenes, as well as hieroglyphic texts narrating stories of gods and heroes. These vessels were used during important ceremonies, and their complexity and beauty make them invaluable works of art.

Another standout piece is the **Vase of the Bat God**, a ritual ceramic representing the death god, a being with a bat-like head, central to Maya mythology. This vase is an impressive example of Maya

potters' technical skill and their deep connection to the spiritual world.

The museum also displays an extraordinary collection of sculptures and stone reliefs, showcasing the Maya artists' mastery in creating monumental works. Notable among these are the figures of rulers and priests, distinguished by their realism and detail. These sculptures not only depict Maya leaders in their splendor but are also rich in religious and political symbolism.



Clay figures of rulers and priests.

Altar Q from Copán is another remarkable jewel of the museum. This altar is a replica of one of the most famous and intricate monuments from the Copán archaeological site and is decorated with detailed figures of the sixteen rulers of the city. Each figure is accompanied by hieroglyphic inscriptions detailing the notable achievements of each ruler, making the altar both a historical record and an invaluable work of art.

JADE JEWELS: SYMBOLS OF POWER

The Maya jade masks, displayed in the National Museum of Maya Art in Guatemala, are more than mere objects of admiration; they are a tangible bridge to the rich and complex worldview of one of the most influential ancient civilizations. These finely carved jade masks, a stone considered more valuable than gold by the Maya, encapsulate centuries of history, spirituality, and



Life-sized monoliths with Maya human carvings.

power. For the ancient Maya, jade symbolized immortality and purity, which is why these masks were used in religious rituals and as funerary offerings for the ruling elite. Each mask is a testament to Maya art, depicting in detail the faces of gods, ancestors, and rulers with an expressiveness that transcends time.

Archaeologists have discovered that these pieces were not only ornamental but also played a crucial role in transition

rituals, believed to help guide the soul to the afterlife. The **Jade Mask of King Pakal**, found in the tomb of Pakal the Great, one of Palenque's most famous rulers, represents the Maya belief in life after death and the immortality of the soul. This is a replica of the original, which is housed in Mexico.

TEXTILES AND FEATHER ART

Textiles and feather art are also significant



Jade art was a fundamental part of Maya culture.



in the museum. The Maya were known for their skill in weaving and creating elaborate ceremonial garments and mantles decorated with feathers from exotic birds. In the museum, visitors can see examples of these textiles, which are notable for their vibrant colors and complex geometric designs.

The **Quetzal Mantle**, made from the feathers of Guatemala's national bird, the quetzal, is an exceptional piece

showcasing the Maya artisans' mastery and dedication. This mantle was worn by leaders during religious ceremonies, and its bright green color symbolized life and fertility.

THE EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF THE MUSEUM

The museum is not only a place to admire ancient pieces but also plays a fundamental role in educating and preserving Guatemala's cultural heritage. Through



temporary exhibitions, educational workshops, and guided tours, the museum aims to raise awareness about the profound importance of Maya culture and its enduring legacy. Additionally, the museum collaborates actively with researchers and archaeologists in the meticulous conservation and study of the pieces, ensuring that these remarkable works of art and symbols of history continue to be appreciated by future generations.





Antigua Guatemala stands out for its colorful colonial architecture that captivates its visitors.

ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

Antigua Guatemala, a colonial jewel nestled in the heart of Central America, is a destination that embodies the rich historical and cultural heritage of Guatemala. Founded in 1543, this city served as the third capital of the Kingdom of Guatemala and has been beautifully preserved as an impressive testament to Spanish Baroque architecture. Its cobblestone streets, lined with colorful facades and majestic ruins,

tell captivating stories of the past while inviting travelers to explore every corner.

Surrounded by imposing volcanoes, Antigua Guatemala offers a truly unique experience where the past seamlessly meets the present. Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979, the city is not only a living testament to colonial history but also a vibrant cultural hub, filled with art galleries and lively festivals celebrating local traditions.



Colorful facades of the colonial houses in Antigua on Arco Street.

CALLE DEL ARCO

Calle del Arco in Antigua Guatemala is one of the most iconic and photographed streets in the country. Antigua Guatemala, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, was the capital of the Kingdom of Guatemala until a devastating earthquake in 1773 forced the capital to move to its current location. Calle del Arco is famous for the Arco de Santa Catalina, built in the 17th century to connect a convent

with a school, allowing nuns to cross the street discreetly without being seen by the public.

The arch is an iconic symbol for every visitor to the city and has witnessed the rich colonial history that unfolded around it. Strolling down Calle del Arco, one can admire the colorful colonial facades, ornate tile roofs, and charming cobblestone streets that transport visitors to another era.



THE SANTA CATALINA ARCH IS THE DEFINING ICON OF ANTIGUA GUATEMALA



The park adjacent to the church, Parque de La Merced, is used as an impromptu market.

PARQUE DE LA MERCED

Parque de La Merced, located in front of the emblematic Church of La Merced, is a picturesque oasis in Antigua Guatemala. This charming green space not only serves as a place for relaxation but also as a popular meeting point frequented by both locals and tourists seeking to unwind and admire the magnificent colonial architecture surrounding the square.

The park is surrounded by lush trees that offer ample shade and a cool atmosphere, ideal for taking a peaceful break amidst the hustle and bustle of the city during the warmer months.

Additionally, street vendors add an authentic local touch, offering a variety of traditional products such as shaved ice, local sweets, and handcrafted souvenirs, enriching the cultural experience of visitors.



Baroque Church of La Merced in Antigua.

CHURCH OF LA MERCED: A BAROQUE TREASURE

The Church of La Merced is one of the most impressive examples of Baroque architecture in Guatemala. Built in 1767, the church stands out with its majestic yellow façade adorned with intricate white details representing religious motifs. La Merced has withstood the test of time and several earthquakes, and today it remains an active place of worship.

Inside, the church houses a beautifully crafted main altar and one of the largest fountains in Latin America in the adjacent cloister. This octagonal fountain provides a tranquil place for reflection and enjoyment of the architectural beauty of the site.

The Church is also the center of many religious celebrations in Antigua, especially during Holy Week, when it becomes the stage for elaborate processions that attract thousands of visitors.



It's worth visiting the inner garden of the Hotel Posada de Don Rodrigo.

HOTEL POSADA DE DON RODRIGO ANTIGUA: COLONIAL CHARM AND HISTORY

Hotel Posada de Don Rodrigo Antigua is an architectural gem that combines the charm of the colonial era with modern comforts. Housed in a 16th-century building, this boutique hotel is a perfect choice for those who want to immerse themselves in the history of **Antigua Guatemala** without sacrificing comfort.

The hotel's rooms are decorated with antique furniture and traditional details, creating a warm and cozy atmosphere that evokes the colonial past. Additionally, the hotel features interior courtyards filled with tropical plants and fountains, providing a tranquil oasis amidst the city. The hotel's restaurant is renowned for its Guatemalan cuisine, offering guests an authentic gastronomic experience in a historic setting.



Fountain in the Central Plaza, the heart of Antigua Guatemala.

PLAZA CENTRAL: THE HEART OF ANTIGUA

Plaza Central in Antigua Guatemala, also known as Parque Central, is the focal point of the city and has been the center of social and political life since its founding. Surrounded by important historic buildings such as the Cathedral of San José, the Town Hall, and the Palace of the Captains General, the plaza is a vibrant place where history and modernity blend.

Plaza Central is an ideal starting point for a tour of Antigua, as it provides easy access to several of the city's most important historical sites.

The Fountain of the Sirens, located in the center of the plaza, is one of the most characteristic features and dates back to the 18th century. The plaza is also a popular location for cultural events and festivities, making it a hub of community life in Antigua.



Gallery of arches on the first floor of the Antigua Guatemala City Hall.

TOWN HALL OF ANTIGUA GUATEMALA: COLONIAL GRANDEUR AND CULTURE

The **Town Hall of Antigua Guatemala**, also known as the Palace of the Town Hall, is a magnificent example of Spanish colonial architecture. Built in the 18th century, this building is distinguished by its gallery of arches on the ground floor, giving it a majestic appearance and serving as a shelter during the rains.

Inside, the **Town Hall houses the Museum of Santiago** and the **General Archive of Central America**, where historical documents narrate the region's history.

The peaceful arch gallery also offers a stunning view of Plaza Central and the Cathedral of San José, making it a perfect spot—sometimes overlooked—for photography and architectural appreciation.



The Cathedral of San José stands out among all the buildings in the Central Plaza.

CATHEDRAL OF SAN JOSÉ

The Cathedral of San José is one of the most important monuments in Antigua Guatemala. Originally built in 1541, the cathedral has been rebuilt several times due to earthquakes that have affected the region.

Although much of the original structure was destroyed, the ruins and the restored sections offer a glimpse of its architectural

grandeur. The current structure began to be erected in 1670 and was completed in 1680, though some work continued for decades.

This cathedral was one of the most magnificent buildings in Central America during the colonial era. Its design reflected the splendor of Spanish Baroque architecture, with an imposing façade adorned with religious sculptures and reliefs, and an interior that housed important sacred art.



Visitors are amazed by the Church of Our Lady of El Carmen, of which only the facade remains.

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF CARMEN

The Church of Our Lady of Carmen is famous for its stunning Baroque façade, which is undoubtedly one of the most elaborate and detailed in Antigua Guatemala. Built in the 17th century, the church was heavily damaged by earthquakes, but its façade—remarkably—has withstood the test of time, becoming one of the city's most recognizable symbols. Despite being in ruins since the devastating earthquake

of 1717, one of the notable features is the use of Solomonic columns, adorned with spiral vines symbolizing the vine of Christ according to Christian tradition. Additionally, the façade includes niches that originally housed statues of saints, although some of these sculptures have been lost over time. The presence of indigenous and local elements in the ornamentation suggests a cultural fusion, where European artistic traditions mixed with native techniques and symbols.



Around the craft market, we also find shops as well as street vendors.

EL CARMEN ARTISAN MARKET

The El Carmen Artisan Market, located next to the Church of Our Lady of Carmen, is an ideal place for those who want to take a piece of Guatemalan culture home. This market offers a wide variety of handmade products, including textiles, ceramics, jewelry, masks, and more.

Each item in the market reflects

Guatemala's rich artisan tradition, especially the techniques used by indigenous communities. Visitors can find everything from hand-woven blankets and bags to hand-painted ceramics, each with its own style and story.

MAYA JADE MUSEUM

The Maya Jade Museum is a fascinating place offering an immersion into the history and cultural significance of jade, a



The Maya Jade Museum is located inside a traditional colonial house in Antigua.

precious stone revered by Mesoamerican civilizations for millennia. Located in Antigua Guatemala, this museum houses an impressive collection of jade artifacts, including jewelry, funerary masks, ceremonial figures, and other ritual objects.

Jade was considered a sacred stone by the Maya, associated with life, fertility, and eternity. In the museum, visitors can learn about the intricate process of

jade extraction and carving, as well as its profound importance in Maya culture and other regional peoples. Exhibits also highlight the ancient techniques used to craft these exquisite pieces. Additionally, the museum features a shop where visitors can purchase authentic jade pieces crafted by Guatemalan artisans. Guided tours are available to provide deeper insights into the historical context and craftsmanship behind the artifacts.



MAYAN TOMBS WITH JADE JEWELRY AND ARTIFACTS ARE IMPRESSIVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS THAT REVEAL MUCH ABOUT MAYA CULTURE AND FUNERARY PRACTICES. JADE, PARTICULARLY GREEN JADE, WAS ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE MATERIALS TO THE MAYA, ASSOCIATED WITH WEALTH, POWER, AND SPIRITUALITY.



Pilot's cabin of the small plane that takes us to Tikal.

FLIGHT TO “MUNDO MAYA”

A flight on a small plane from Guatemala City to **Mundo Maya International Airport** in Petén with **TAG Airlines** is a unique experience that allows travelers to discover both the natural wonders, such as Flores Island, and the archaeological marvels like the **Tikal Archaeological Park**.

The journey begins at La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala

City, where passengers board a small aircraft or a 72-seat twin-engine plane if demand is high. In just minutes, the plane ascends above the bustling cityscape. The transition from urban areas to the vast tropical rainforest is gradual but breathtaking. Passengers can view winding rivers, mountains, and the lush jungles of Petén, home to the majestic Maya civilization. As the plane glides over the verdant landscape, it feels like stepping into a living history book.



Flying at low altitude allows us to enjoy Guatemala's incredible natural landscape.

Small planes offer a more intimate and personalized experience, making the flight an adventure in itself.

This echoes the excitement of movies like *"Indiana Jones"* and their archaeological escapades, which we are about to embark on. The aerial view alone sets the stage for the wonders awaiting below.

Landing at **Mundo Maya International Airport**, located in Flores City, marks the

start of a new adventure. Although small, this modern airport is well-equipped to welcome visitors from around the world who come with the intent of exploring the wonders that Petén has to offer.

From the airport, travelers can continue their journey to archaeological sites such as **Tikal** or explore the charming **island of Flores**, known for its cobblestone streets, colorful houses, and stunning lake surroundings.



The majestic pyramids of Tikal rise above the dense Guatemalan jungle.

TIKAL NATIONAL PARK

Tikal National Park, located in the heart of the dense tropical rainforest of Petén, Guatemala, is a site that not only amazes with its imposing natural beauty but also with its immense archaeological and historical value. This park, declared a **UNESCO World Heritage site**, is a living testament to the grandeur of the Maya civilization, which flourished for over a millennium

in Mesoamerica. To fully understand the significance of Tikal, it is essential to first learn about the Maya, their history, customs, and the impact they had on the cultural development of the region.

THE MAYA CIVILIZATION: A LEGACY OF WISDOM

The Maya civilization is one of the most distinguished and enigmatic of pre-Columbian history. Over more





The Maya temples of Tikal rise above the verdant jungle.

than two millennia, the Maya built an empire based on advanced knowledge in astronomy, mathematics, and architecture, among other fields. Their influence extended across southern **Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador**—a region of dense tropical rainforest rich in natural resources where they left a mark in the form of monumental cities, complex agricultural systems, and a rich artistic and literary tradition.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Maya society was rigorously hierarchical, with a social structure that reflected their worldview and political organization. At the top of this social pyramid were the ahaw or kings, who were considered intermediaries between the gods and the people. These rulers not only led in political and military matters but also played crucial roles in religious rituals, ensuring harmony between the earthly world and the cosmos.



In Tikal, archaeology and biodiversity coexist in perfect harmony.

The nobility, comprising priests, warriors, and officials, played a key role in the administration and ritual life of society. Priests, in particular, were figures of great respect and power due to their knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, and hieroglyphic writing. These intellectual and religious elites were responsible for interpreting omens and planning ceremonies that ensured the continuity of life and cosmic order. Their ability to predict astronomical

events also influenced political and agricultural decisions, highlighting the interconnectedness of science and religion in Maya life.

Below the nobility were the merchants, artisans, and farmers, who sustained the Maya economy. Farmers employed advanced agricultural techniques, such as milpa and terrace systems, to cultivate maize, beans, and squash—the staple foods of the Maya diet. These agricultural



Exploring the majestic ruins of Tikal, a monumental legacy of the Maya civilization.

methods not only ensured food self-sufficiency but also allowed for the storage of surpluses that could be used in times of scarcity.

RELIGION AND COSMOLOGY

Religion was the heart of Maya life, deeply intertwined with their cosmology. The Maya conceived the universe as a tripartite structure composed of the underworld, the earth, and the sky, with each level

inhabited by various deities and spiritual forces influencing all aspects of daily life. Principal deities included Kulkán, the feathered serpent god, and Chaac, the rain god, both vital for agricultural prosperity and the general well-being of the community.

The ritual calendar, known as Tzolk'in, played a crucial role in planning religious and political activities. This 260-day calendar was used to set the dates for the



Tikal: History and nature intertwine in a mystical corner of Guatemala.

most important ceremonies, ensuring that offerings and sacrifices were made at the most auspicious times according to celestial movements.

Temples and pyramids, such as those found in Tikal, were not merely physical structures but symbolic representations of the cosmos. Built to align with key astronomical events, these buildings served as connection points between the divine and human realms. Rituals

carried out in these sacred places ranged from simple food offerings to human sacrifices—acts considered necessary to maintain the balance of the universe.

SCIENTIFIC AND ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS

One of the most impressive achievements of the Maya was their development of an extremely sophisticated hieroglyphic writing system, one of the few fully developed systems in Mesoamerica.



The majesty of Tikal evokes the grandeur of the ancient Maya world.

Through this writing, the Maya recorded not only historical events and genealogies but also aspects of their daily life, astronomical knowledge, and their myths and legends.

In the artistic realm, the Maya produced a vast array of works, from stone sculptures to painted ceramics such as vessels, plates, and human figures. Monumental architecture, as seen in Tikal, is also a testament to their skill

and creativity. Temples, pyramids, and palaces were designed not only for functionality but also to impress and symbolize power, thereby consolidating authority. The elaborate decorations and use of mythological symbols in the architecture reflect an integration of art, religion, and politics.

TIKAL: THE HEART OF THE MAYA CIVILIZATION

Tikal National Park is one of the



From Temple IV, the panoramic views of the jungle are breathtaking.

most emblematic sites of the Maya civilization. Located in the midst of the Petén tropical rainforest, this archaeological site has been a subject of fascination and study for decades. Spanning over 57,000 hectares, Tikal is not only an archaeological marvel but also a natural sanctuary of biodiversity. Tikal was one of the largest and most powerful cities of its time, and today it offers a fascinating window into the ancient world.

TIKAL: FROM ITS ORIGINS TO ITS ZENITH

The history of Tikal dates back to the Middle Preclassic period, around the 6th century BC, when it began to develop as a small settlement in the jungle. Over the following centuries, Tikal experienced steady growth, becoming one of the most powerful and prominent cities in the Maya region.

The peak of Tikal occurred during the



Walking through Tikal is immersing yourself in the millennia-old history of the Maya.

Classic period, between the 3rd and 9th centuries AD. During this time, the city expanded significantly, constructing some of the most impressive monuments in the Maya world, such as the Temple of the Great Jaguar and the Temple of the Masks.

Tikal became a major political, economic, and religious center of great influence. The sophistication and extent of its constructions reflect extensive control over the landscape and a high degree of

social and administrative organization. The city's elaborate system of roads and reservoirs also demonstrated advanced engineering skills.

The city was strategically located to control important trade routes, allowing it to accumulate wealth and power. Tikal maintained both alliances and rivalries with other Maya cities, such as Calakmul, with which it waged a series of wars that determined the fate of both powers.



Tikal: where the ruins speak of a glorious and enigmatic past.

THE DECLINE OF TIKAL

By the end of the 9th century, Tikal, like many other Maya cities, began to experience a decline. The exact reasons for this collapse are debated among archaeologists, but it is likely that a combination of factors such as resource depletion, internal wars, and climate change contributed to the city's fall. Social upheaval and external pressures from rival city-states may have also played a role.

Despite its abandonment, Tikal was never forgotten. The ruins of the city remained hidden under the dense jungle vegetation for centuries until they were rediscovered in the 19th century, marking the beginning of a new era of exploration and archaeological study that continues to this day. The rediscovery of Tikal has provided invaluable insight into the life and culture of one of the most complex civilizations in history.



The Great Plaza of Tikal, the nerve center of Maya ceremonial and social life.

THE MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE OF TIKAL

The architecture of Tikal is among the most impressive in the Maya world. The city is organized around a series of plazas, acropolises, and causeways that connect the various architectural complexes. These buildings were constructed using local limestone and are adorned with sculptures and reliefs depicting deities, rulers, and mythological scenes. The meticulous design of the city not only

reflects advanced architectural skills but also a deep integration with the natural environment.

The **Grand Plaza** is the ceremonial center of Tikal and one of the most iconic architectural ensembles of the site. Surrounded by temples, palaces, and stelae, the **Grand Plaza** was the location where the most important ceremonies of the city took place. Among the most notable buildings surrounding it are the



The Great Plaza connects the main temples, serving as the cultural epicenter of Tikal.

Temple of the Great Jaguar (Temple I) and the **Temple of the Masks** (Temple II).

a rich array of offerings, including jade jewelry and finely decorated ceramics.

The **Temple of the Great Jaguar**, also known as **Temple I**, is perhaps the most iconic structure of Tikal. This majestic pyramidal temple, rising 47 meters in height, was constructed during the reign of Jasaw Chan K'awiil I in the 8th century AD.

Its primary function was to serve as a tomb for this great ruler, who was buried with

Temple I is an example of Maya ceremonial architecture at its finest. Its design, combining functionality and symbolism, reflects the importance of funerary rites and the belief in the continuity of royal power in the afterlife. The temple's imposing presence serves as a powerful reminder of the grandeur of Maya architecture.



Temple I, known as the Temple of the Great Jaguar, stands out against the dense Guatemalan jungle.

The **Temple of the Masks**, or **Temple II**, is located opposite Temple I in the Grand Plaza. This temple was built by Yik'in Chan K'awiil, the son of Jasaw Chan K'awiil I, and is likely dedicated to his mother.

The temple gets its name from the large masks carved into its façade, representing deities that emphasize the importance of divinity in Maya royalty. Standing 38 meters high, Temple II is slightly shorter than Temple I but equally

impressive. The temple faces Temple I, symbolizing the duality and balance that are so present in Maya cosmology.

From its summit, visitors can enjoy panoramic views of the Grand Plaza and the surrounding jungle, an experience that allows them to imagine what life in Tikal was like during its peak. The vastness and complexity of Tikal's architecture highlight the city's importance and influence within the Maya civilization.



The Central Acropolis of Tikal, a residential and ceremonial complex that reflects Maya power.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES

The **Central Acropolis** is another of Tikal's most important complexes. This palace complex served as the residence for the ruling elite and also as an administrative center. The **Acropolis** is composed of a series of courtyards, residential buildings, and temples, some of which have revealed rich archaeological treasures, such as intricate stucco carvings and ceramics.

Another impressive complex is the North Acropolis, which contains funerary temples and several ceremonial structures. Here, royal tombs were found, including that of Jasaw Chan K'awiil I, whose burial in Temple I underscores the connection between this complex and Tikal's dynastic power.

The South Acropolis appears to have been residential, housing important members of the nobility. The design of this acropolis



Explore the Central Acropolis, a maze of impressive Maya plazas, temples, and palaces.

is more complex, with multiple levels and buildings suggesting a multifunctional use, which could include residential and administrative functions. The South Acropolis reflects the complexity and sophistication of Maya urban planning and architecture.

The Lost World, an E-Group type complex, is another prominent feature of Tikal National Park. These complexes are considered astronomical

observatories and are oriented in such a way that they track the movement of the sun throughout the year. The Lost World dates back to the Preclassic period, making it one of the oldest complexes in Tikal, and demonstrates the continuity of ceremonial use of the site over the centuries.

REDISCOVERY AND CONSERVATION

Tikal was rediscovered in the 19th century,



The residential buildings of Tikal reveal the daily life and social organization of the Maya.

marking the beginning of a renewed interest in ancient Mesoamerican civilizations. Since then, numerous dedicated archaeologists have worked on the meticulous excavation and restoration of this site. The conservation work is an ongoing effort due to the challenges presented by the dense tropical rainforest, which constantly threatens to reclaim these ancient structures.

In addition to its archaeological

significance, Tikal is a natural sanctuary that houses a great diversity of flora and fauna, making it a protected area of dual value, both cultural and ecological. The park's rich biodiversity, including endangered species like jaguars, pumas, anteaters, and a wide variety of birds, including the iconic quetzal, makes Tikal National Park a must-visit destination for both archaeologists and nature enthusiasts alike.



Isla de Flores is the ideal place to relax after the intense experience of Tikal.

FLORES ISLAND: A GEM IN THE HEART OF GUATEMALA

In the heart of the Petén department lies one of the country's most charming and picturesque tourist destinations: The **Flores Island**. This small island, located on **Lake Petén Itzá**, is a true paradise that combines history, culture, and nature in a setting that seems frozen in time. With its colorful colonial houses, cobblestone streets, and relaxed

atmosphere, Flores is a place that invites exploration and relaxation, making it a must-visit destination for any traveler coming to Guatemala.

THE CHARM OF THE COLORFUL HOUSES

One of the first things that captivate visitors upon arriving at Isla de Flores is the vibrant color palette decorating its houses. The facades of the homes, painted in warm and cheerful hues



While it is possible to access the island by car via a single bridge, the traditional mode of transportation is the boat.

ranging from bright yellow to sky blue, create a stunning visual contrast with the deep green of the surrounding vegetation and the rich blue of the lake encircling the island. This burst of color is not only a delight for the eyes but also reflects the warmth and hospitality of Flores' inhabitants.

The island's shape is another unique feature. With its nearly circular outline, Flores Island resembles a small floating

oasis in the middle of the lake. This geographic peculiarity not only gives it a special character but also makes it easy to explore on foot, as the entire island can be traversed in just a few minutes. The cobblestone streets winding through the island are lined with craft shops, restaurants, and small cafés, making each stroll a discovery-filled experience.

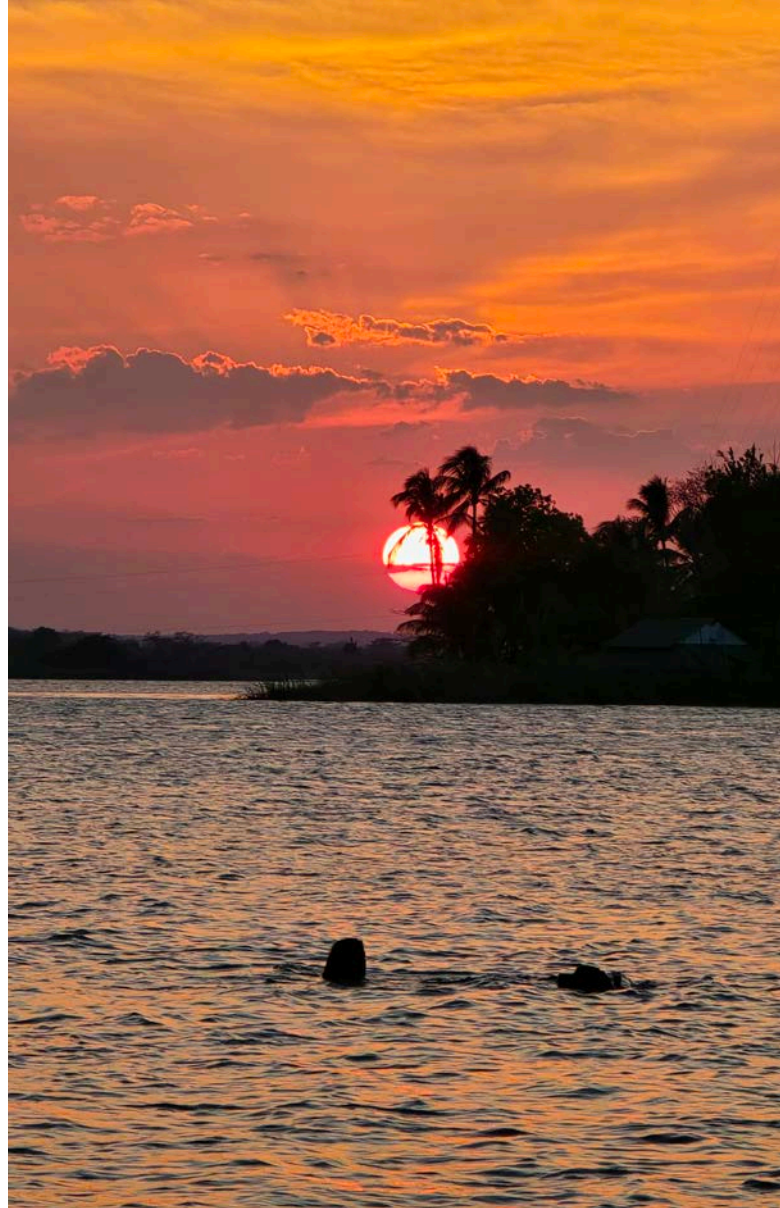


The charm of Flores Island lies in its colorful houses and its cobblestone streets.

A TOURIST DESTINATION FOR EVERY TASTE

The **Flores island** is a tourist destination that offers something for everyone. For history and culture enthusiasts, Flores is the gateway to the ancient Mayan ruins of Tikal, one of the most important archaeological sites in Mesoamerica. Many tourists use the island as a base to explore these impressive ruins, enjoying the tranquility of Flores after a day of adventures in the jungle.

For those seeking relaxation, the island provides a tranquil and inviting atmosphere, perfect for unwinding from daily stress. Its narrow streets, lined with trees and flowers, invite a leisurely stroll, while the gentle sound of the water from **Lake Petén Itzá** accompanies each step. Additionally, the range of hotels and hostels on the island is broad and varied, from budget options to boutique accommodations with spectacular lake views.



The best time of day on Flores Island is undoubtedly the slow sunset.

Gastronomy is another island attraction. The island's restaurants offer a variety of dishes, from traditional Guatemalan fare to international options. It is common to find a small restaurant with lake views where you can enjoy fresh fish ceviche or tamales, accompanied by lemonade or local beer.

SUNSET STROLL: A SPECTACLE

One of the most magical and enchanting

moments on Isla de Flores is watching the sunset from the promenade that circles the island. As the sun slowly descends, the sky is painted with oranges, pinks, and purples, reflecting on the tranquil waters of the lake. It is at this moment that the island comes to life, with both locals and tourists enjoying the cool breeze and truly spectacular views.

The waterfront promenade is ideal for walking, chatting, and soaking in the



All visitors gather on the lakeside promenade to experience the sunset on Flores Island.

beauty of the picturesque surroundings. Along this charming walkway, bars and restaurants provide the perfect setting to enjoy a refreshing drink as the sun sets behind the majestic mountains surrounding the lake. The atmosphere is relaxed and festive, with soft music and the gentle sound of boats crossing the water.

On weekends, local families, young people, and tourists fill the promenade,

capturing the charm of the sunset. Bars and restaurants host live events, such as music or outdoor movies, adding a special touch to the island's unique ambiance.

With its picturesque charm and welcoming atmosphere, the **Flores island** is a must-visit destination in **Guatemala**, where every corner surprises with its vibrant colors and stunning views, making it a true gem waiting to be discovered.





Pacaya Volcano in the early morning.

PACAYA VOLCANO NATIONAL PARK: A THRILLING ADVENTURE

Pacaya Volcano National Park is one of Guatemala's most prominent tourist destinations. Located about 47 kilometers south of Guatemala City, this volcano has been a continuous source of volcanic activity since its first recorded eruption in 1565, continuing to this day. Its accessibility and relatively predictable behavior have made Pacaya

an attractive site for both national and international tourists seeking a unique adventure and a connection with nature.

HISTORY AND GEOLOGY OF THE VOLCANO

Pacaya Volcano is part of Guatemala's volcanic chain, and its geological structure classifies it as a stratovolcano.

Over the centuries, the volcano has experienced numerous eruptions



The ascent can be done on foot or on horseback, taking different routes.

that have shaped the surrounding landscape, creating lava fields, craters, and fumaroles.

These geological features not only give Pacaya its impressive appearance but also make it a natural laboratory for scientists and an irresistible attraction for hikers.

Since its **last major eruption in 2010**, Pacaya has maintained constant activity,

including visible lava flows and gas emissions.

This activity is closely monitored by Guatemalan authorities, who ensure that access to the volcano is safe for visitors.

However, it is essential to always follow the recommendations of local guides, who should be hired for the ascent, and adhere to safety instructions provided during the visit.



Lava field at the base of the volcano.

ASCENT OF THE VOLCANO: A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

The experience of climbing Pacaya Volcano is undoubtedly the highlight for park visitors. The ascent begins in the small village of San Francisco de Sales, where local guides can be hired.

The trek to the summit is of moderate difficulty and typically takes about two hours, depending on the group's pace. The trail traverses various types of

terrain, from wooded areas to solidified lava fields, offering a visually stunning and contrast-filled journey.

During the climb, visitors are rewarded with panoramic views of nearby volcanoes such as Agua, Fuego, and Acatenango. On clear days, it is even possible to see the Pacific Ocean on the horizon.

The experience culminates upon reaching the summit, where hikers can



The flora in the Pacaya area is very striking and well-adapted to this volcanic region.

approach the crater and, if conditions permit, observe the incandescent lava flows emerging from the volcano.

One of the most popular activities at the summit is roasting marshmallows on the volcano's hot rocks, a ritual that has become a tradition among visitors. This simple yet fascinating act allows hikers to directly experience the energy of Pacaya, creating unforgettable memories.

FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Despite its volcanic nature, the park is home to a surprising variety of flora and fauna. As one ascends, the vegetation changes from lush tropical forests to hardy shrubs and lava fields, where only the most resilient plants manage to survive. Among the diverse animal species, it is possible to spot colorful birds such as hummingbirds, hawks, and small mammals.



The old chapel of Barretal can be found on the trail that leads to the activity area.

EL BARRETAL FARM: REST AFTER THE ASCENT

Located near **Pacaya Volcano**, **El Barretal farm** is a destination that perfectly complements the volcanic adventure with a touch of relaxation and culture. This farm is known for its high-quality coffee production, cultivated in the rich volcanic soils surrounding **Pacaya**. The fertile ground, combined with the ideal climate of the region, produces coffee beans with

exceptional characteristics that coffee enthusiasts will not want to miss.

EL BARRETAL'S HIGH-ALTITUDE COFFEE

The coffee grown at **El Barretal farm** is one of the main attractions for visitors. The coffee beans benefit from the unique conditions provided by the volcano's proximity, giving them a complex and richly nuanced flavor profile. During a visit to the farm, tourists can participate in tours



On the estate itself, the high-altitude coffee that is cultivated there is roasted, and visitors can purchase it.

that explain the processes of cultivation, harvesting, and roasting. These tours are an excellent way to learn about the traditional and modern techniques used to produce one of Guatemala's most exclusive coffees.

In addition to learning about the production process, visitors have the opportunity to participate in coffee tastings, where they can appreciate the subtleties of different batches and

varieties produced on the farm. This experience is ideal for coffee aficionados as well as those who wish to learn more about Guatemalan coffee culture.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

El Barretal farm is not just a place to enjoy coffee; it also offers a variety of outdoor activities that allow visitors to enjoy the natural surroundings. Among the most popular activities are



One of the activities available is rappelling down a natural waterfall.



the hikes along trails that traverse the coffee plantations and the farm's forests. These trails are perfect for spotting local wildlife, especially the numerous bird species that inhabit the area.

For those seeking a more peaceful experience, the farm offers designated picnic areas where visitors can enjoy an outdoor lunch with spectacular views of **Pacaya Volcano**. This is an ideal spot to relax and absorb the

serenity of the landscape after an intense hike up the volcano.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

El Barretal farm is strongly committed to sustainability and responsible tourism. All activities on the farm are designed to minimize environmental impact and promote sustainable practices. Visitors can learn about the farm's initiatives to conserve the natural environment, such



Rest and Picnic Area at El Barretal farm.

as the use of organic farming techniques and sustainable water management. The farm also engages in reforestation efforts to restore local ecosystems and protect biodiversity.

This sustainable approach not only preserves the natural beauty of the region but also supports local communities by creating jobs and fostering economic development in the area. By integrating eco-friendly

practices, the farm enhances the overall visitor experience while contributing positively to the environment.

Pacaya Volcano National Park and **El Barretal farm** offer a complete tourist experience that combines adventure, nature, and culture. From the thrilling ascent of the volcano to relaxing at the farm with a cup of exclusive coffee, **these destinations reflect the rich diversity of experiences Guatemala has to offer.**



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