

The Maya Empire
Merida, Yucatan Peninsula, Cancun, Guatemala City, Lake Atitlan, Tikal, Livingston, Copan
13 days – 12 nights
History, Archeology, Nature

Day 1: Merida

Welcome to Merida! Upon arrival you'll be met and transfer to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure to enjoy Merida on your own.

Day 2. Merida

Have breakfast start your tour through the Yucatan Peninsula, where once the Mayan people created many of the greatest pre-Columbian cities in the Americas. Your first stop is at Ek' Balam, which was once a large regional center and a major Mayan site between 600 and 900 A.D. Wander among some very impressive ruins and climb the Acropolis. The views from the top are simply unbelievable! The plaster stucco decoration you will see here is very well preserved as the ruins were buried before the city was abandoned. After lunch visit Chichen Itza; the most important archaeological site of the Maya-Toltec civilization in Yucatan. Throughout almost 1,000 years (435 A.D. – 1440 A.D), the Mayas and Toltecs have left their marks and vision of the world in the monuments and artistic work you find here. Witness some of the masterpieces of the Mesoamerican architecture such as the Kukulcan Pyramid, also known as El Castillo, the Warriors' Temple, and the El Caracol. Chichen Itza and the Cenote of Sacrifices were, and still are, sacred centers for the Maya. People. This Cultural Heritage Zone of Mexico, was inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage list in 1988. Your day ends in Merida, where you will spend the night. [B/L]

Day 3: Merida

Today you will explore the Puuc Route on a full day tour. The name Puuc which means small hills in the Yucatec Mayan language, due to the topography of the place, later designated the architectural style found here. This short route located 50 miles south of Merida, covers sites of impressive beauty; it is a voyage to the times of the best stone sculptors of the Maya era. See Labná where you find the Grand Palace, decorated with the mask of the god Chaac and snakeheads. On the same site, observe the Arch, considered one of the prettiest and most decorated Mayan arches ever found. A couple of miles ahead and you will get to Sayil a UNESCO Heritage Site, along with Uxmal. Sayil, is home to a beautiful palace with 94 rooms that accommodated up to 350 people. A leisurely walk leads you to the El Mirador temple, and just a few steps further you see the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Doorway. The last site you will visit today is the famous Uxmal home to the massive Magician's Pyramids, the complex Doves Temple, the imposing Nuns Quadrangle, and the imposing Governor's Palace. Later this afternoon, go back to Merida. [B/L]

Day 4. Merida, Cancun

Cobá means 'waters stirred by the wind', an appropriate Mayan name as this site is surrounded by two large lagoons. Coba was a large Mayan hub bordered by villages, connected by roads (called sacbes). These roads were built by the Maya for commerce. At its height Coba had an estimated population of 50,000 people (7th century A.D.). Explore the Macanxoc Group with several stelaes and altars: a sign that this area was a religious center, observe the 2 ball courts, and climb the second highest pyramid in the Yucatan, the Nohoch Mul to appreciate the view that stretches across the jungle. Then head back to Cancun for overnight. [B]

Day 5: Cancun, Guatemala City, Lake Atitlan

Early in the morning board your flight to Guatemala City! Upon arrival your English-speaking guide will meet you at the airport. Together you will depart for a 3-hour ride to your hotel on the shore of Lake Atitlan. Remainder of the day at leisure to explore the grounds of your hotel. Overnight in Lake Atitlan. [B]

Note: Clients must arrive in Guatemala City (day 5) before 3 pm, otherwise they will need to overnight in Guatemala City or Antigua and go to Lake Atitlan the following day.

Day 6: Lake Atitlan

Morning visit to the San Juan La Laguna Village; stop at a textile cooperative and observe how the locals color their fabrics using natural dyes and old techniques. Chat with the artists before boarding the boat to Santiago Village for lunch. After lunch, explore this rural town and find the house where the Maya God Maximon is living. Maximon is one of the most important examples of the syncretism between the Maya and Catholic religions, as the Mayan deity is associated with St. Simon. Each year a different brotherhood has the privilege of taking care of their God. Once with Maximon, you may see a local Shaman performing a ritual. Before departing, stop at the local church where you will learn the history of this very traditional place. Overnight in Lake Atitlan. [B/L]

Day 7: Lake Atitlan, Flores, Tikal

After breakfast, leave your hotel and ride through the central highland region. See the local Mayan people in their traditional dress, working in the fields, collecting firewood, traveling between markets, selling their wares, and in a bit more than one hour you will be arriving at the bustling market in the highland town of Chichicastenango. Explore this famous market with its local fruits, vegetables, endless varieties of beautiful textile, and superb crafts made of wood and ceramics. It's time to see the famous St. Tomas Church where local Maya people come to perform their rituals within the Catholic Church – demonstrating once again the syncretism of the two faiths. After lunch, drive to the airport in Guatemala City for the evening flight to Flores, gateway to Tikal. Arrival in Tikal and transfer to your hotel. Overnight in Tikal. [B/L]

Note: Market days in Chichicastenango are on Thursday and Sunday.

Day 8: Tikal, Yaxhá, Tikal

Yaxhá is the third largest Mesoamerican archaeological site in Guatemala. This guided tour will provide you with an inside look of the people and customs of this site, which, in its peak, served as the ceremonial center of the pre-Colombian Maya era. Yaxhá, derived from its Mayan meaning for 'blue-green water', is estimated to have extended for over 90 sq. miles, with a population of more than 40,000 people. The site contains many intriguing temples, but the Temple 216, located in the East Acropolis, towers above the site allowing magnificent panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. You also find here two scenic lakes. At sunset, relax sipping a delicious wine at the edge of Lake Yaxhá and cruise the blue-green lagoon in a small boat before returning to your hotel. Overnight in Tikal [B]

Day 9: Tikal

The city of Tikal, was the capital of a conquest state which became one of the most powerful kingdoms of the ancient Maya. The city reached its peak between 200 and 900 AC. Once with a population of 100,000, it was highly structured and immersed in spiritual practice; many of the massive buildings visible today were raised during that time. The monuments paid tribute to the rulers of the past and were meant to please the deities. In addition to achievements in construction, the Maya also excelled in the arts and astronomy. Drive to Tikal National Park, refuge for most of the animals in Guatemala and a place where they can be easily spotted. Here, enjoy a tour of this fabulous site, with huge temples rising up through the jungle canopy, and a variety of tropical animals and birds. After lunch, return to your hotel. Overnight in Tikal. [B/L]

Day 10: Tikal, Rio Dulce, Livingston

In the morning take a ride to Rio Dulce where you will board a private cruise along the Dulce River through the central canyon and down to Livingston, a Garifuna town on the coast. Livingston, a Caribbean fishing enclave that sits at the mouth of the Río Dulce, feels like a tropical island. The Garifuna people - descendants of shipwrecked African slaves who mixed with the indigenous Caribs

in the seventeenth century, have their own language, culture, and cuisine, all of which is preserved, in part, due to the town's inaccessibility as Livingston is only reachable by water or air. Once a booming seaport, the now mellow town comprises a narrow beach, a handful of clapboard house lined streets, and a few good lunch spots where the local, percussion-based music band is always playing. Overnight in Livingston. [B/L]

Day 11: Livingston, Quirigua, Copan

This morning you will leave Guatemala behind and cross the border of Honduras to the colonial town of Copán. En-route stop at Quiriguá, declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1979. Most of the ruins found here are believed to be built on the 8th century when Quirigua was an autonomous thriving state. The site includes mythological animals sculpted in massive blocks of stone, calendars, temples, a palace, a ball court, a plaza, and 12 carved stelae that narrate the history between Quiriguá and Copan in Honduras. Lunch will be provided at a local restaurant just off the road before proceeding to Copan, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980, one of the most important sites of the Mayan civilization. Copan was the capital of the most important Maya period, which lasted almost 5 centuries from the 5th through the 10th century AD. The site is the best-researched Mayan city, offering a representation of how the Mayans used to live. Sixteen rulers governed Copan during the Classic period. Copan features two state of the art archaeological museums, and the Copan Valley is famous for a great variety of birds, colorful toucans and parrots, and native macaws. Overnight in Copán. [B/L]

Day 12: Copan

Today explore the archeological site at Copán, famous for its intricate carvings and remarkable hieroglyphic staircase; visit the Copán museum located on the main square, home to a selection of artifacts found at the site. The onsite Museum of the Mayan Sculpture displays a full-size replica of the Rosalila Temple, the main religious sanctuary on the site. After the tour, return to Copán. Afternoon at leisure to explore the city on own. Overnight in Copán. [B/L]

Day 13: Copan, San Pedro Sula, USA

At agreed time, transfer to the airport to board your flight home, or to your next destination. [B]

Note: Clients must depart from San Pedro Sula after 1:00 pm otherwise they will need to spend the previous night in San Pedro Sula.

[B] = Breakfast |

[B/L] = Breakfast and Lunch



Your Tour includes:

- Transfers between airports and hotels
- 12 nights accommodation at hotels of preference
 - Merida 3 night's in
 - Cancun - 1 night
 - Lake Atitlan* - 2 nights
 - Tikal - 3 nights
 - Livingston - 1 night
 - Copan - 2 nights
- Meals
 - Daily breakfast
 - 8 lunches
- Visits as indicated in the itinerary

- Entrance fees to sites mentioned
- English Speaking guides
- Transfers and tours are a mix of private and shared services
- All hotel taxes

Tour do not include:

- International or domestic air tickets
- Early check-in or late check-out at hotels
- Services and food not listed in the itinerary
- Beverages during the meals
- Hotel extras, and personal expenses
- Tips for guides, drivers, and in restaurants

Hotels in your Tour

City	Hotel Name	Room Type	Tripadviso
Tourist class			
Merida (Mexico)	Gran Real Yucatan	Standard	3.5
Cancun (Mexico)	Beachscape Cancun	Standard	4
Lago Atitlan	Porta del Lago	Standard	4
Tikal (Guatemala)	Casona del Lago	Standard	4
Livingston	Villa Caribe	Standard	4
Copan (Honduras)	Clarion Copan	Standard	4.5
First class			
Merida (Mexico)	Holiday Inn	Standard	4
Cancun (Mexico)	El Presidente	Standard	4.5
Lago Atitlan	Hotel Atitlan	Standard	4.5
Tikal (Guatemala)	Camino Real Tikal	Standard	4
Livingston	Villa Caribe	Standard	4
Copan (Honduras)	Marina Copan	Standard	4.5

All hotels are subject to confirmation at the time of booking

Tour Prices:

Category	Double	Single
2019 departures		
Tourist class	\$4,475	\$7,809
First class	\$4,869	\$8,495

Rates are per person and may change without notice and are valid through 22 December 2019 except for major holidays such as Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas & New Year. Other blackout dates may apply.

This tour requires a minimum of 2 passengers to operate

Tour Code: GU03MID19VMT