

GUATEMALA

Capital: Guatemala City
Population: 2.3 million
Currency: Quetzal

Language: Spanish
Time Zone: EST minus 2 hours
Electricity: 110 / 60Hz

Fun Facts



- Guatemala is ground zero for chocolate; they invented the first chocolate bar during Mayan Times
- The main language is Spanish, however Guatemala recognizes 21 different dialects of Mayan languages – well over double its northern neighbor, Mexico
- The name of the currency, “Quetzal,” shares its name with the national bird of Guatemala
- Aldous Huxley, famous British author of Brave New World, regarded Lake Atitlán as the most beautiful lake in the world

The pulse of Latin America waits in the heart of Central America – Guatemala. This small, yet bountiful, country contains some of the most colorful scenery, the warmest people, spectacular Spanish Colonial architecture, active volcanoes, matchlessly beautiful lakes, and the heart of the Ancient Mayan civilization. Guatemala is a surprising place, a little more off the beaten path, and still possesses a charm and mystery unlike its Latin American neighbors. It's easy to feel at rest here – easy to feel welcome – and easy to feel like you're not quite ready to go home after you visit.

Guatemala City

Guatemala City, also called “Guate” by the locals, is the capital city of Guatemala and serves as a perfect base city for your exploration of Guatemala. With dozens of museums and activity in the main squares, you'll have plenty to keep you occupied. It's the most modern and cosmopolitan city in Guatemala – and visitors often find that the pedestrian roads and the Zona Viva offer the best entertainment and nightlife in town.

Antigua

One of the biggest draws to Guatemala is the southern central city of Antigua. Antigua is simply fantastic. It is cradled by three different volcanoes and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site best known for its architecture. Once the Spanish capital of Guatemala, Antigua was one of the most powerful cities in Central America during the 17th and 18th centuries. As the area prospered, stunning buildings and monasteries were built and the city became the heart of Central America. It wasn't until 1773 when a massive earthquake destroyed the city and the capitol was moved to Guatemala City that the city fell into ruin. However, a few citizens remained in the area and began rebuilding Antigua to its former glory that you will find today. The ornate Spanish Colonial architecture found here reeks of history and evokes an enchanting spiritual vibe that makes Antigua a compelling place to visit. In Antigua, see the Cathedral de San José, the Plaza Mayor, and the Palace, but also take time to walk around the market (bustling on weekends especially) where the locals are selling their handicrafts, textiles, and some of the freshest food and produce you've ever tasted. Antigua is also home to the Jade Maya Factory, where you can learn more about the symbolic gemstone and its unique Mesoamerican history, and local coffee plantations – Guatemala's coffee is legendarily some of the best in the world. Cherish every minute in this sacred city and allow it to pander to all of your senses.

Chichicastenango

To get a little deeper into the Mayan traditions, a great town to visit is Chichicastenango – a small municipality...with a really long name. Without a doubt, the main attraction in the town is the Indian Market

– a mélange of energetic color and tradition. Overseeing the market is the town's greatest landmark, the Church of Santo Tomás, a pristinely white-façade sanctuary atop a set of eighteen Mayan stairs, authentic and still venerated to this day. These stairs once led to a pre-Hispanic Mayan temple. The Church of Santo Tomás is still used today for both Mayan rituals as well as Catholic mass and holds a profound meaning for the citizens of the town.

Lake Atitlán

Just west of Chichicastenango, Lake Atitlán sits in the highlands of Guatemala and is a natural caldera-formed lake surrounded by a staggering twelve volcanoes and stirred by a Mayan influence unlike anywhere else in Latin America. The reason for this profound weight of Mayan civilization is that there are dozens of indigenous tribes surrounding the lake, many of which still practice ancient Mayan customs. Unlike touristy ruins and sacred temples, this is a wealthy gem of culture and adventure. Kayaking the lake, hiking, and meeting the locals in the hillside villages are just some the activities to partake in this area.

Tikal

This ancient Mayan city holds incredible mystery in a compelling setting. Positioned in the heart of Guatemala's rainforest, it's protected and upholds a certain aura of magic. Maybe it's due to the fact that it's less touristy than many Mayan ruins, or maybe that the monuments are so well-maintained. Whatever the reason, visitors of Tikal report how much they love the feeling of being in the forest as they walk around the various temples and pyramids. And interestingly, Tikal was featured in Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope, as the setting of the planet Yavin. You can check out statues found during excavation at the museum and enjoy spending the day surrounded by the Mayan architecture dating all the way back to 600 AD.

Copan, Honduras

Copan is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a gem amongst the collection of Mayan ruins. Speculated that the area was inhabited as early as 2000 BC, it has become a particularly important site in Mayan history. In its heyday, Copan was the largest and most influential city in the Mayan world and housed as many as 20,000 people – all to ultimately be abandoned by the 10th century AD. You can spend a day here strolling around the city's Acropolis, take in the monuments and temples by foot, and learn the history of how such a powerful mecca of Mayan civilization met its untimely demise.

Colors beyond comparison, people of unique hospitality and rich heritage, enlightened spiritual sites and villages, abundant volcanoes, jungle, lakes, and cuisine that is matchless in its fusion of ancient Mayan influence, Spanish fervor, and modern flavor – Guatemala offers an exclusive perspective of both the former Mayan civilization and its present-day practices. You cannot find this authenticity anywhere else in the world. So, visit Antigua and wrap yourself in warm hospitality and the charm of the beautiful Spanish colonial city, spend some time on the incomparable Lago de Atitlán soaking up the culture, and immerse yourself in Guatemala's simple charm and staggering beauty – a gem of modern-day Latin America.



VISAS, PASSPORTS, AND OTHER ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

A visa for your visit to Guatemala is **not necessary** for US citizens. If you hold a passport from another country, check with your local consulate about requirements for travel to Guatemala.

All passengers traveling internationally are required to have a passport. Most countries require that the passport be valid for at least six (6) months beyond the conclusion of your trip, so please check the expiration date carefully. It is also recommended you have a minimum of three blank pages in your passport when traveling, as many countries require blank pages. Please carry proper identification (your passport) on you and do not leave it in your suitcase or hotel room. Most countries have laws that require you to carry your passport with you at all times.



COUNTRY CODES

The country code for Guatemala is 502. When calling to Guatemala from overseas, dial your international access code (011 from the US/Canada), followed by the country code, area code, and phone number. Phone numbers in Guatemala are 8 digits in length. Dialing from the US/Canada: 011 502#### ####.



CURRENCY

The official currency of Guatemala is the Quetzal but the US Dollar is also widely accepted. ATMs can be found in most major cities but it is not uncommon to find yourself in an area without an ATM or money exchange, so plan accordingly while in major cities.

1 Guatemalan Quetzal (CTQ) = 100 Centavos (c)

- Banknote denominations: \$.50, \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$200 quetzal
- Coin denominations: 1c, 5c, 10c, 25c, 50c, 1CTQ (quetzal)

You will rarely see centavos due to their insignificant value. It is handy to have small denominations in change.

Credit cards are accepted in Guatemala, and you should have no problems using them in higher-end and more commercial shops and restaurants. Visa and MasterCard are the most accepted. Smaller establishments in more remote places are less likely to accept credit cards, but their usage is becoming more common. Some merchants may apply a small service charge to use a credit card.

Traveler's checks are extremely difficult to exchange in Guatemala. Their use is not recommended.

For the most current exchange rates, please go to our website at Globusjourneys.com/Currency.

Bank Hours:

- Mon. – Fri.: 9 am – 4 pm
- Sat.: 8am – Noon
- Sun.: Closed



BUDGETING AND SHOPPING

The following budget guidelines are just approximate values or starting values for meals and are per person. Actual prices will vary widely by restaurant and city within a country but below are some averages as provided by our experienced personnel.

- The approximate cost of a soft drink/mineral water/coffee is US \$1.30.
- An average lunch consisting of a salad or sandwich and a soda or water starts at approximately US \$6.
- Dinner at a mid-range restaurant with dessert and a non-alcoholic beverage starts at approximately US \$25.

Shopping

In open street markets, try not to touch items unless you are interested in purchasing them. If you would like to take photos, please ask permission. Most vendors are happy to have their picture taken with the item you have just purchased. If you are being confronted by vendors, smile, say nothing and then shake your hand low to say no. This is polite and they understand. For many people, saying "No" means I want it at a lower price and they will follow you in attempt to bargain.

In many areas of Central America, bargaining for purchases is normal. First, ask for a price. Offer an amount slightly below what you wish to pay. It is important to be polite and smile while bargaining. In most cases, bargaining will not save you a lot of money. Keep different value bills folded and separated in different pockets, that way you can pull out the exact money you need, and sometimes this can close the deal. Opening a wallet or purse to pull a roll of bills out can lead to negotiation problems. Always finish the transaction with Thank You and a smile.



TIPPING

Tipping in Guatemala is standard. For restaurant services, a tip of 10-20% is reasonable. In some restaurants, a 10% gratuity is already included in the bill, so check before you pay.

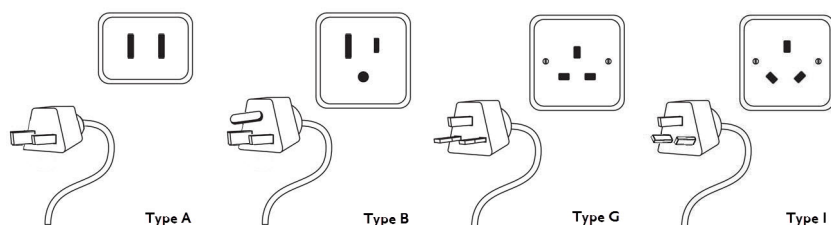
For a taxi, a tip is not customary.

Tip hotel staff a few dollars for room and bar service.



ELECTRICITY AND ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

Voltage for outlets is the same as those in North America. Outlets in Guatemala will be similar to those in the United States or Canada.



TEMPERATURES

Guatemala enjoys temperate weather, generally mild but can cool off in the evenings, even in the summer.

To help you plan, below are average low and high temperatures for Guatemala.

Guatemala City

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
54/77°F	55/79°F	57/81°F	61/81°F	62/79°F	63/78°F	61/76°F	62/75°F	61/75°F	60/74°F	58/74°F	57/75°F

To convert to Celsius, subtract 30, then divide by 2. While not exact, this simple formula will give a close estimation.



FOOD SPECIALTIES

Guatemala offers a wide variety of food, but it is uniquely known for its Mayan cuisine, which largely consists of beans, chilies, and corn. Guatemala produces exceptionally fresh produce and varies from traditional Mexican cuisine in that it uses a little less spice. The tamale is a major food and there are hundreds of ways in which it is prepared.

In restaurants, always ask if they have menus in English, as many establishments will.

Drinking Water

Bottled water is how many people drink water even at home. Never ask for tap water for many reasons. Ice is rarely used as well.



CUSTOMS AND CULTURE

Greeting and Interaction

- The best way to address people when you do not know their name is to simply use “Señor” (male) or “Señora” (female).
- It’s normal to introduce yourself with a polite greeting of “buenos días/tardes” (good morning/afternoon or evening).
- Greeting customs in Central and South America also incorporate a lot of personal contact. Women will generally greet other women by kissing once on each cheek, right to left. Men will also kiss women on the cheeks when greeting them, but handshaking is reserved for between two men.
- People here have a tendency to stand relatively close to each other when they are talking. Although you might find that this is perhaps a little too close for your liking, you should just accept that this is normal behavior, and trying to create more space between you and your counterpart could be seen as rude.

Public Restrooms

- Ladies should always travel with tissue. If public restrooms have toilet paper, it is sometimes rationed. Hand sanitizers are recommended to bring with you as some bathrooms may not have hot water and soap. In some public restrooms you are required to pay a small fee.



A FEW WORDS OF THE LOCAL LANGUAGE

Spanish:

CONVERSATION

¡Hola! Hi!, **¡Buenos Días!** Good morning!, **¡Buenas Noches!** Good evening!, **Me llamo _____**. My name is _____, **¿Cómo se llama usted?** What is your name?, **Mucho gusto.** Pleased to meet you., **¿Cómo está usted?** How are you?, **Bien, gracias.** **¿Y usted?** Fine, thanks. And you?, **Mas o menos** So-so, **¡Hasta luego!** See you later!, **Adiós.** Good-bye., **Por favor.** Please., **Vivo en _____** I live in _____, **(Muchas) gracias.** **(Muy amable.)** (Many) thanks. (Very kind.), **De nada.** You're welcome., **Lo siento.** I'm sorry., **¿Me permite?** May I?, **Disculpe.** Excuse me. (To get someone's attention.), **Con permiso.** Excuse me. (For leaving or passing through.), **Perdón.** Excuse me. (For sneezing, arriving late, etc.), **¡Salud!** Gesundheit! (When someone sneezes.) Cheers! (For toasting with drinks.), **¿Me pasa _____ por favor?** Could you please pass me _____?, **Sí.** Yes., **No.** No., **Gracias** Thank you, **No entiendo!** don't understand, **No hablo español** I don't speak Spanish, **¿Habla inglés?** Do you speak English?, **¿Dónde está el baño?** Where is the bathroom?, **Está cerca?** Is it near?, **Está lejos?** Is it far?, **Siga recto.** Go straight ahead., **Gire a la derecha.** Turn right., **Gire a la izquierda.** Turn left., **Nescito esto.** I would like this., **Una mesa para dos, por favor.** A table for two, please., **La carta, por favor.** The menu, please., **La lista de vinos, por favor.** The wine list, please., **primer plato** appetizers, **plato principal** main course, **postre** dessert, **Quisiera algo para beber.** I would like something to drink., **Un vaso de agua, por favor.** A glass of water, please., **Una Cerveza.** Beer, **Una Copa de vino tinto/blanco** Glass of red/white wine, **La cuenta, por favor.** The check, please., **Incluye la propina?** Is the tip included?, **Desayuno** Breakfast., **Comida** lunch, **Cena** dinner, **¡Buen provecho!** Enjoy the meal!, **¡Salud!** To your health!, **Está riquísima!** It's delicious!, **Plato.** plate, **Tenedor.** fork, **Cuchillo.** knife, **Cuchara.** spoon, **Servilleta.** napkin, **Hielo.** ice, **Sal.** salt, **Pimiento.** pepper, **Azúcar.** sugar, **Sopa.** soup, **Ensalada.** salad, **Pan.** bread, **Mantequilla.** butter, **Pollo.** Chicken, **Carne.** Beef, **Cerdo.** Pork, **Quisiera la carne poco cocida.** I like my steak rare., **Quisiera la carne a medio cocer.** I like my steak medium., **Quisiera la carne bien cocida.** I like my steak well done.

NUMBERS

Cero. Zero, **Uno.** 1, **Dos.** 2, **Tres.** 3, **Cuatro.** 4, **Cinco.** 5, **Seis.** 6, **Siete.** 7, **Ocho.** 8, **Nueve.** 9, **Diez.** 10, **Once.** 11, **Doce.** 12, **Trece** 13, **Catorce** 14, **Quince** 15, **Dieciseis** 16, **Diecisiete.** 17, **Dieciocho.** 18, **Diecinueve.** 19, **Veinte.** 20, **Cien.** 100, **Mil.** 1000.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE COUNTRY INFORMATION

Additional country-specific information for US citizens can be found on the US Government's website www.travel.state.gov. Here, you can find the most up-to-date information about destination descriptions,

passports/visas, safety and security, transportation, travel local laws, alerts/warnings, vaccinations, and more. For citizens of other nations, we recommend you consult your local consulate for travel information, regulations, and requirements.

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