2019
HARVARD ALUMNI TRAVELS
DISCOVER • LEARN • CONNECT • EXPLORE

THE LEGACY OF THE MAYA: Belize & Guatemala
February 25–March 5, 2019
Escape to Central America for the perfect winter getaway. Belize and Guatemala offer some of the most breathtaking scenery: thick tropical forests stretching up towards the misty heights of the sparsely populated Maya Mountains, extraordinary Maya archaeology, exuberant wildlife, Spanish colonial heritage, impressive volcanoes, and a vibrant indigenous culture. Discover two amazing Central American countries, while staying in charming, luxurious, tropical boutique hotels and lodges.

Your adventure starts in Belize from where you travel to the Pine Ridge area for explorations of the ancient Maya cities of Caracol and Xunantunich. Continue to Guatemala to visit the impressive archaeological site of Tikal surrounded by the exuberant forest of the Petén. These sites provide a thorough introduction of the Maya civilization during the Classic Period 600 to 900 A.D. Your journey then takes you to Lake Atitlán, considered one of the most beautiful lakes in the world, with visits to indigenous open-air markets where the men and women still wear traditional colorful hand-woven dress. Learn about the living Maya of today, their culture, and communities, as well as local textiles and music.

Your tour concludes in the graceful and charming colonial town of Antigua, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Surrounded by majestic volcanoes, this city of the eternal spring is filled with vestiges of its colonial past, transporting you back to when the Spanish ruled this land.

Activity Level 3: ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

A LITTLE MORE TO IT

My walking shoes are laced up tight and I’m ready to keep up with my traveling companions. I look forward to getting to know them on the drives and/or flights we’ll take between cities. I enjoy getting around in Zodiac rafts and 4x4 vehicles for short durations. A little mental and physical stimulation will do me good!

TO BOOK A TRIP, CALL 800-422-1636 OR VISIT ALUMNI.HARVARD.EDU/TRAVEL

Study Leader

Harvard Study Leader to be announced.
## Trip Sampling

### LAND & RAIL

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DAY 1 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25
US / Belize City / Pine Ridge area
Depart the U.S. and fly to Belize City, Belize. Transfer to your hotel in the Pine Ridge area. Welcome reception and dinner.
Hidden Valley Inn (D)

DAY 2 TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26
Caracol
Spend a full day at Caracol, the largest Maya site in Belize and one of the most impressive in Central America. The ruins were lost in the rainforest for several centuries until their rediscovery by chicleros in 1936. Once Caracol has been fully excavated it may dwarf even the great city of Tikal. The site is a Natural Monument Reserve, and heaven for wildlife as well as archeologists. Look out for exotic birds and other wildlife as you meander through the ruins. On the return to the lodge, stop the massive Rio Frio cave and nearby pools where you may consider taking a refreshing dip.
Hidden Valley Inn (B, L, D)

DAY 3 WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27
Xunantunich / Flores (Guatemala)
Drive to the nearby Xunantunich Maya Site. An impressive well-excavated site, Xunantunich was a thriving Maya city during the Classic Period, from about 600 to 900 A.D. You reach this major ceremonial center by crossing the Mopan River aboard a hand-cranked car-ferry. Once there, the site provides an impressive view of the entire river valley; its centerpiece, El Castillo, rises 120 feet above the plaza, making it one of the tallest buildings in Belize. After lunch travel to the Petén jungle in Guatemala where Tikal is located.
Las Lagunas Boutique Hotel (B, L, D)

DAY 4 THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28
Tikal
Today explore Tikal, one of the grandest of the Mayan cities. Tikal flourished in the Classic period from A.D. 250 to 900 until it suddenly collapsed its population vanished. The jungle closed over the ancient metropolis and for a thousand years it lay buried under its cover. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Tikal has been under excavation and reconstruction since the late 1950s. Its location within a national park provides excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing. Today, Tikal is an extraordinary exhibit of temple pyramids topped with stone roofed combs towering above the surrounding Petén jungle. Plazas, deep reservoirs, carved stelae, and massive altars rise from the rainforest floor. Visit the Tikal Museum and the Lithic and Stelae Museums to view treasures from the excavations.
Las Lagunas Boutique Hotel (B, L, D)

DAY 5 FRIDAY, MARCH 1
Lake Atitlán
Take a morning flight to Guatemala City and transfer to Lake Atitlán. With breathtaking volcanic panoramas, Atitlán is considered one of the most beautiful volcanic lakes in the world. On the way, visit the authentic Indian market of Sololá. See men in their traditional dress of gold-embroidered jackets distinctive of the town and behold stunning mountainside views of the lake. Alternatively, visit the Maya archaeological site of Iximché once the capital of the Maya Kaqchiquel before arriving at your hotel located on the shores of Lake Atitlán and featuring beautiful gardens.
Hotel Atitlán (B, L, D)

DAY 6 SATURDAY, MARCH 2
Santa Cruz / San Juan La Laguna
Enjoy the views as you take a pleasant boat ride to Santa Cruz, one of the 12 Indian villages.

FOR DETAILED ITINERARIES, VISIT ALUMNI.HARVARD.EDU/TRAVEL
located around the lake, all with striking, distinctive dress and traditions. Walk through the town, see the foot-loom art inside native homes and learn about weaving. After lunch continue by boat to the beautiful town of San Juan La Laguna where the Tz’utujil Maya lived. Return to the hotel with time to explore the beautiful vistas of Lake Atitlán and the lovely gardens, or visit the village of Panajachel which is great for walking and seeing the local textiles and handicrafts.

Hotel Atitlán (B, L)

DAY 7 SUNDAY, MARCH 3
Chichicastenango / Antigua Guatemala
Depart for Chichicastenango, an Indian village nestled in the highlands at 7,000 feet. Spend the morning at the colorful native market of Chichicastenango, the largest in Central America. Here vendors sell flowers, textiles, food, pottery, handicrafts and more! Enjoy seeing the indigenous women from surrounding villages wearing superb native dress of heavily embroidered blouses. In addition, see beautiful carved masks. After lunch, transfer to the town of Antigua Guatemala and to your lovely hotel located in what it was a 17th-century monastery.

Casa Santo Domingo (B, L, D)

DAY 8 MONDAY, MARCH 4
Antigua
At 5,000 feet in a valley surrounded by 14,000-foot volcanoes, Antigua is one of the most charming of the colonial towns of the Americas and is a World Heritage site. This morning’s walking tour starts at the Central Park and includes the Ayuntamiento (Administrative building), Cathedral, Convent of the Capuchinas, and Merced Church, among other sites. Continue to Casa K’Ojom for the preservation of Maya music and instruments, and visit the Centro Cultural La Azotea to see a collection of typical dresses of the region.

Casa Santo Domingo (B, L, D)

DAY 9 TUESDAY, MARCH 5
Antigua / US
Transfer to the international airport for your return flight home. (B)

Highlights

• Marvel at the biodiversity of pristine rainforests where wildlife thrives
• Immerse yourself in the history of the charming colonial town of Antigua, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
• Learn about Guatemala’s colorful indigenous cultures and traditions as you visit local markets in the villages of Sololá and Chichicastenango.
• Cruise across Lake Atitlan on a private boat ride with volcanic panoramas.
• Explore some of the most impressive archaeological remains of the ancient Maya Civilization including Caracol, Xunantunich and Tikal.
This exclusive expedition is designed for Harvard alumni and friends who are interested in learning about the nature, history, culture, and archaeology of Belize and Guatemala. Visits include some of the finest rainforest reserves in Central America plus the archaeological sites of Xunantunich and Tikal and the colonial and cultural wonders of the highlands of Guatemala. While at the national parks, reserves, and colonial towns, there is a daily program of nature exploration, guided rain forest and historical walks, and educational discussions. This program is described as active to moderately active and includes hiking and walking over unpaved uneven and sometimes slippery surfaces often without handrails. Travel is by motor coach, vans, chartered planes, or scheduled flights, ferry, and motor launch with daily walks of up to two miles in length at a leisurely pace suitable for nature study and Maya ruins explorations. Typically, the weather is hot and humid in the rainforest (mid 80s); and spring like in the highlands. Even in the dry season, when this trip is scheduled, some rain can be expected. Since some of the travel will be in remote areas, everyone must be flexible concerning time schedules. This program is a tremendous experience for travelers who are in good shape, able to walk, with an appetite for adventure who can tolerate some insects, heat, and bumpy dirt roads for the chance to explore superb archaeological and natural areas.

**What to Expect**

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**Accommodations**

**Hidden Valley Inn**  
The Hidden Valley Inn (above left) is an intimate luxury resort set inside a vast private reserve exclusive to guests. Located in the Mountain Pine Ridge area of the Cayo District of Belize, The Inn and its twelve cottages are appointed with comforts and amenities. Comfortable lounges with stone hearths, mahogany bar room, pool terrace, free Wi-Fi, and flourishing gardens create an atmosphere that accommodates a sense of adventure as well as comfort and leisure.

**Las Lagunas Boutique Hotel**  
This small boutique hotel (above right) is located amongst 300 acres of private rainforest reserve overlooking the Quelix Lagoon and Petén jungle and minutes away from the Mayan ruins of Tikal. Each private bungalow features satellite TV, a minbar, air-conditioning and its own free Wi-Fi network. Common areas include a swimming pool, restaurant, bar, hot tub, spa and onsite museum.

**Hotel Atitlán**  
Hotel Atitlán (above middle) is a rustic-style property offering extensive gardens and panoramic views of Atitlán Lake. It has an outdoor pool, hot tub and a botanical garden. Free Wi-Fi in rooms and public areas.

**Casa Santo Domingo**  
Set within a former convent, this 5-star hotel offers an outdoor pool, spa and gym, as well as several museums and galleries. The spacious rooms at Hotel Museo Casa Santo Domingo feature elegant décor, Wi-Fi, a fireplace and scenic views. Also includes a plasma cable TV, a safe, minibar and private bathroom.

**Cost**

Per person, double occupancy .......$6,595  
Per person, single supplement .......$1,260
To register, fill out this form and return to Harvard Alumni Travels with your deposit of $1,000 per person.

How did you hear about this trip?
THE LEGACY OF THE MAYA: Belize & Guatemala  February 25–March 5, 2019