

MAYAN COSMOVISION: RURAL AND COMMUNITY TOURISM IN GUATEMALA.

21 DAYS & 20 NIGHTS.

Day 1. GUATEMALA CITY

Pick up at Guatemala City International Airport “La Aurora” (preferably in the morning). We will start our journey visiting Kaminal Juyú. Kaminal Juyú is a Mayan archaeological site from the pre-classic period, located in Zone 7 of Guatemala City.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel Barcelo
 Plan B: Posada Belén.
 Plan C: Posada Los Volcanes.

Day 2. GUATEMALA CITY – ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

We leave Guatemala City and travel to Old Mixco. The Old Mixco site is located 60 kilometers from the capital. The site contains pyramids, observatories and stadiums used for the ancient ball game pelota. It is surrounded by vegetation. After this visit we head to Antigua, a colonial city at the foot of the Agua volcano. According to the Mayan worldview, volcanoes are sacred, representing the breasts of Mother Earth with the lava being her milk. They are believed to be alive and can be used to establish communication with the spirits ancestors.

Overnight: Plan A: Palacio Doña Leonor.
 Plan B: Hotel Las Farolas.
 Plan C: Posada La Merced.

Day 3. AGUA VOLCANO

We Leave Antigua and travel to Santa Maria de Jesus, a village located at the bottom of the volcano Agua. Both women and men maintain their tradition and especially women still wear their beautiful traditional clothing. You will climb volcano Agua to an altitude of 3,766 meters above sea level with a traditional lunch prepared by indigenous women and peasants of the community. The volcano is known by the Kaqchikel people as Jun Ajpu, one of the divine twins and first semi-god described in the Pop Wuj. Intermediate level of difficulty.

Overnight: Plan A: Palacio Doña Leonor.
 Plan B: Hotel Las Farolas.
 Plan C: Posada La Merced.

Day 4. ANTIGUA GUATEMALA – TECPAN

Today we will visit San Andres Itzapa, San Juan Comalapa and Tecpan Guatemala. We will meet the mystical population of Kaqchikel people, also known as Ruyal Chay or Rio de los Chayes. Saint San Simon – also known as Ma Ximon – is worshipped in this village. His character is linked to an ancient ancestral tradition related with the wayeb, which are the last five days of the solar calendar of the Mayans. Next we head to San Juan Comalapa, whose original name is Chi Xot. Chi Xot can be translated as “place of the comal”, due to the abundance of comales (a comal is a special earthenware dish used for preparing tortillas). Accompanied by a local guide we visit the village and watch a weaving demonstration, visit galleries of art and see examples of local artisans. Lunch in the Gallery-Café Gabriel is included.

Overnight: Plan A: Finca San Ricardo, Tecpán.
 Plan B: Finca San Ricardo, Tecpán.
 Plan C: Finca San Ricardo, Tecpán.

Day 5. TEPAN – CHICHICASTENANGO.

(Must be a Wednesday or Saturday). After breakfast we visit the ancient Mayan city Ixim Che, “tree of corn” associated with Kej, another symbol of the lunar calendar tzolkin that means four paths or four points. Ixim Che was constructed around 1470, it was the last capital of the Mayan-Kachiquel people and was converted in 1524 into the first capital of the Spaniards in Guatemalan territory. Together with a Mayan spiritual leader you will celebrate a ceremony for power, justice, stability and harmony. After having witnessed this special ceremony, we travel to Chichicastenango and check in to your hotel. In the afternoon we visit all the important sites in Chichicastenango, such as the Museum Rossbach, the church of Santo Tomás and the sacred site Cerro Pascual ab’aj o Turcaj (its traditional name is Chwa B’atz). We also visit the museum of masks. You will learn about the 18 steps of the church of Santo Tomás that represent the 18 months of the Mayan calendar, and the sacred book of the Quiches, the Pop Wuj (book of events), which was discovered in the convent. We recommend to read this book before starting your travels in Guatemala.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel Santo Tomas.
 Plan B: Hotel Chigüila.
 Plan C: Chalet Hotel.

Day 6. CHICHICASTENANGO – LAKE ATITLAN (PANAJACHEL)

(Thursday or Sunday): We visit the colorful market at Chichicastenango where you can buy all sorts of handicrafts, indigenous materials and other souvenirs. Then we will walk to a small community called Pajuliboy to experience its magnificent nature, including a waterfall. After lunch we head to Lake Atitlan.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel Atitlán.
 Plan B: Hotel Villa Santa Catarina.
 Plan C: Posada Los Volcanes.

Day 7. LAKE ATITLAN

A bilingual, professional guide will escort us to the municipal pier in Panajachel to travel to Santiago Atitlan, a village of the Tz’utujil people inhabited since 1250. We will visit the village and then continue to Chuitinamit, a small pre-Colombian archaeological park where we will find pyramids and plazas – silent witnesses of the occupation of the ancient Mayans. Next we will continue by boat to a village called San Juan La Laguna to enjoy a fresh lunch prepared by the community. The rest of

the day will be spent visiting associations of women that indirectly are dedicated to tourism, a garden of medicinal plants, weaving shops, natural dye plants and painting workshops. At the end of the day we will return to the hotel in Panajachel.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel Atitlán.
 Plan B: Hotel Villa Santa Catarina.
 Plan C: Posada Los Volcanes.

Day 8. SAN PEDRO VOLCANO

With a local guide we will hike to the foot of the volcano San Pedro in San Pedro La Laguna, and hike all the way up to the summit . At the top you will be able to witness a breathtaking view of Lake Atitlán, a lake that is considered to be the most beautiful lake of the world. The climb takes about 5 hours there and back, and has an intermediate level of difficulty. After the hike we return to our hotel in Panajachel.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel Atitlán.
 Plan B: Hotel Villa Santa Catarina.
 Plan C: Posada Los Volcanes.

Day 9. LAKE ATITLAN (PANAJACHEL) – QUETZALTENANGO

From Panajachel we head towards Quetzaltenango, the second-largest city in Guatemala, better known as Xelaju (pronounced “shay-la-who”), the cradle of culture or the city of summits. On the way we visit San Andres Xecul with its fantastically-colored church and Salcaja, home to the first church constructed in all of Central America. In the afternoon a cultural-historical guide will explain the history of Quetzaltenango, its architecture, monuments, its role as the capital of the sixth-state and its chocolate.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel Casa Mañen.
 Plan B: Hotel Modelo.
 Plan C: Hotel Los Olivos.

Day 10. QUETZALTENANGO – HUEHUETENANGO

Today we visit the Ixmucané library. The library got its name from the grandmother who created the men of corn, and is associated with health and sickness. Then we visit the Ixxik Museum of Mayan Clothing. Ix represents all that is feminine and kik represents life, the essence of the Mayan people and blood. This museum is an initiative of local women dedicated to renewing the value of the work of the weavers, and the symbolic content of the Mayan Cosmovision is assimilated in the clothing. Information will be given about the weavings, then there will be a guided tour of the museum with detailed explanations about each of the traditional garments exhibited, and finally there will be a traditional lunch in a local restaurant. After lunch we travel to Huehuetenango where this communitarian experience rich in humanity, spirituality and culture will finish for the day.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel Los Cuchumatanes.
 Plan B: Hotel Casa Blanca.
 Plan C: Hotel Zacaleu.

Day 11. ZACULEU – TODOS SANTOS – CHIABAL

Accompanied by a local guide we will make a brief tour of Huehuetenango, visiting its central plaza, the Catholic Church, the municipal theatre and the Institute of Culture. The people there speak Mam, Q'anjob'al and Spanish and work in agriculture, commerce, industry, services and artisan workshops. Worthy of special mention are the ceramic glass products, musical instruments, especially guitars, fireworks and palm products. We continue to Chivacabé to visit the paleontology site El Mamut. Here on display are mammoth fossils and prehistoric deer from the paleo-indio period. We resume our travels towards the ancient Mayan city Saq Ulew (Zaculeu,) whose name means "white land" in K'iché. Buried in the heart of the Cuchumatán mountain range, Saq Ulew was the capital city of the Mam kingdom and is considered one of the most important archaeological sites of the Mayan post-classic period. The buildings date from the pre-classic period. Today on display are the remains of the temples, plazas and areas for playing the ancient ball game pelota. Of note at this site are the temascales, which were believed to help purify the bodies and spirits of the leaders before ceremonies. After leaving Zaculeu, we head to Todos Santos Cuchumatán, whose archaeological artefacts indicate inhabitation since the early classic period, around the year 1500 BC. We visit the Todos Santos Artisans' Shop where a video will be presented that shows the story of the town and its traditions and customs. Next on our program is the Museum of Balam Culture, whose owner Don Fortunato has collected a big variety of articles during his life, ranging from everyday items such as shoes, traditional dresses and traditional dances and masks, to ceramic items as well as pre-Colombian artifacts including utensils and raw materials for preparing food, musical instruments and photographs taken by Hans Namuth. His collection displays the evolution of men, women and children from the time of his grandparents to the present day. The journey then continues to Chiabal, a community of Mam origin located 17 kilometers from Todos Santos. We will spend the night in homes of local families that are members of the Association of Organizations of the Cuchumatanes (ASOCUCH are its initials in Spanish). They will share their food and provide a unique experience in an autochthonous cultural environment. Here you will learn about the way of life of this people. The community of Chiabal is surrounded by nature, traditional mud-brick houses and women weaving outside their houses.

Overnight: Plan A: Accommodation with local families.
 Plan B: Accommodation with local families.
 Plan C: Accommodation with local families.

Day 12. CHIABAL – CHAJUL

We will have breakfast at 7:30am with the families in their homes. The guide from ASOCUCH will take the group to the highest mountain peak in the country to enjoy a spectacular view of the Todos Santos Cuchumatán Municipal Forest Reserve. The journey will continue to Chiantla for a brief tour and visit to its church constructed between 1722 and 1723. On display is the image of the Virgen of Candelaria which dates from the seventeenth century and is visited by pilgrims. The altarpiece that guards the virgin is in baroque style and elaborated with silver. Then we leave Chiantla and head to the Ixil region in the territorial department of El Quiché, comprised of Nebaj, Chajul and Cotzal. Chajul was the most important place in Ixil. Ceramic archaeological artefacts suggest that this region has been occupied since the second century AC and its indigenous control ended with the Spanish conquest. The communities of this region were severely affected during the civil war that ended with the signing of the Peace Accords in December 1996. Its inhabitants were forced to choose between supporting the national army or the armed guerrillas. The "scorched earth" policy polarized the population and initiated a massive displacement of the population resulting in the destruction of the social fabric of the communities. Despite all the hardships they had to endure, the Ixil region still retains its cultural richness and traditions. The traditional dress is one of the

characteristics that remains intact and is considered a perfect fusion of history and tradition. During much of the nineteenth century there were no ladino people (meaning non-indigenous, or often a mixture of different cultures) and only at the beginning of the twentieth century did ladina families move to the area. Upon arrival in Chajul we will check in to the Posada Vetz K'aol, owned by the Association Chajulense, where rooms and bathrooms are shared. After a bit of rest, a local guide from the association will accompany the group to a house with murals from the sixteenth century and the colonial church that has on display wooden altarpieces, antique paintings and the Christ of Golgota. The architecture of the houses, which are made of mud-brick, wood, and tile roofs make Chajul a place unique for its culture, tradition and ancestral customs. Dinner will be served in the Posada Vetz K'aol where you can acquire artisan works produced by members of the Association of Women United for Life, Youth Association Tx'amil Chajulense and Pastoral de la Mujer.

Overnight: Plan A: Posada Vetz K'aol.
 Plan B: Posada Vetz K'aol.
 Plan C: Posada Vetz K'aol.

Day 13. CHAJUL – USPANTAN

Breakfast will be ready at 8:00am in the Posada. Accompanied by a local guide we will visit the Ixil Mayan Museum and the House of Culture that has on display ceramic vases, rock tools, historic documents, clothing, and an urn with remains of victims of the civil war, weapons and other items. Next on we continue to Tzich'el, a waterfall whose distance is calculated to be 75 meters from San Juan Cotzal. We also visit the Catholic Church whose route of the cross tells about the horrors of the civil war. Lunch will be at the Ixil Cultural Center, prepared by members of the Ixil Mayan Center. Before or after lunch we will be able to visit the museum and artisan market of Nebaj. During lunch we listen to a conference about the Mayan cosmovision and textiles, the history of the Ixil region and its culture, traditions and customs. After lunch we travel to the surroundings of Nebaj and learn about the four rulers of the Mayan cosmovision: Xo'l chaxb'aez West, Ti'kajay South, Ti'ixaal' East, and Kuexul Chi'm North. Also we will visit a cemetery containing a monument to the victims of the civil war that ended with the signing of the peace accords in 1996. In the afternoon we head to Uspantán to have dinner in the restaurant El Golazo.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel La Uspanteka.
 Plan B: Hotel La Uspanteka.
 Plan C: Hotel La Uspanteka.

Day 14. USPANTAN – COBAN

At 7:00am we leave the hotel to have breakfast at the El Golazo restaurant. According to historians the inhabitants of Uspantán have their origins in the pre-classic period. In 1530 they were conquered by the Spanish, making them one of the last groups to be conquered, along with the people of Ixil. In Uspantán a local guide, who is a member of the Uspantán Tourism Association (ACAT are its initials in Spanish), will guide the group on a one and a half hour hike of moderate difficulty to the grottos of Peña Flor. On the way you may see squirrels, armadillos and listen to the singing of birds. You can see archaeological remains and evidence of an area for playing the Mayan ball game pelota, which belonged to the first site of this ancient city called Tzunun Kaab', as Uspantán was originally called. At the end of the track is the Peña Flor grotto covered with moss and colorful orchids where beautiful waterfalls emerge. A fruit snack will be provided before returning to the road, where a vehicle will be waiting to take the group to El Pajuil in Chicamán accompanied by a guide from the El Pajuil Poqomchi Committee of Educational Culture and Ethnic Tourism (CCEPP are its initials in

Spanish). Upon arrival at El Pajuil we will visit a Mayan kitchen called *poqomchi'*, to enjoy a local lunch known as *saq'ik* (a soup made of corn, chile and turkey meat), accompanied by marimba music played by local children. After lunch we visit the community museum and artisan workshops. Then we leave Chicamán and head to the Xoconeb sacred hill. At this site there are twelve *cofradías* from the Uspanteka, K'iche and Q'eqchi' cultures (*cofradías* are associations and stewardships of Mesoamerican origin). In Xoconeb we will also find two caves, one of which is like a church with areas dedicated to the images of saints, where candles are placed. The other cave is used by Mayan priests (*ajq'íl*) to celebrate ceremonies according to their calendar. The so called sacred flame is fed with colorful candles, which are lighted to ask for health and riches, bless, seeds, and to express gratitude for favors already given. At this sacred hill a ceremony will be performed asking for health, life and safety on the journey home.

Overnight: Plan A: Park Hotel.
Plan B: Hotel Casa Duranta.
Plan C: Pensión Monja Blanca.

Day 15. COBAN – SAN JUAN CHAMELCO – COBAN

We start the day at 8:00am. To take advantage of the fresh morning we will start with a visit to the nearby Chicoj Coffee Cooperative comprised of more than 300 people of q'eqchi' ethnicity. Guides from the community will explain about the coffee production process during a tour at the plantation. Then we return to the city of Coban, founded in 1543 by the Dominican friars. It was given the name "Imperial City" by the Spanish King Carlos V, as a result of the admiration prompted by the visit of Aj Pop, also known as Juan Matalbatz and other Maya Q'eqchi' leaders. From the central plaza we visit the beautiful cathedral constructed in 1543 where you can admire altarpieces, candelabras and candlesticks. We continue our tour with a visit to the small historical museum of Alta Verapaz and visitors' center of the region. Then we visit the Museum of the Mayan Prince where a magnificent private collection that holds pre-hispanic pieces is on display. We continue by paying a visit to the Ixmucané Council of Mayan Women with fifty members of Q'eqchi' origin, where you can buy beautiful dolls and artisan works made by widows and orphans of the civil war that ended in 1996 with the signing of the peace. We will watch a demonstration by the artisans and enjoy some *tostaditas* and a drink called *pinol*. Next we head to the Calvario constructed in 1810. We will climb all the 137 steps, that are illuminated by candles on January 14 and 15 when the religious festival Señor de Esquipulas is celebrated, on December 8 in honor of the Virgin of Concepción and on December 24 and 31, creating a mystical atmosphere. Before finishing the morning we will visit the artisan shop of the Aj K'uub'anel Association of Artisans where we will find weavings and earthenware products, leather and traditional sweets. NOTE: The sequence of the visits can change. We will have some free time to enjoy lunch (not provided) in Cobán.

At 2:00pm we travel to San Juan Chamelco. On the way we visit the Chirrepec Agricultural Cooperative to learn about the cultivation, harvest and processing of tea. In San Juan Chamelco we will visit a site honoring Juan Matalbatz, Cacique de Caciques (Chief of Chiefs), a national hero for having negotiated a peaceful entry of the Spanish army into the territory of Tezulutlán. He was the only indigenous chief who visited the Spanish Royal Court, and who for his visit was named as first governor for life of the Verapaz region. Is the only occasion during the Spanish arrival in which an indigenous chief was permitted to retain his political power. Juan Matalbatz was given the right to detain and punish Spaniards and this prompted the province to change its name from Tezulutlán (Tierra de Guerra – land of war) to Verapaz (Land of True Peace).

Overnight: Plan A: Park Hotel.
Plan B: Hotel Casa Duranta.

Plan C: Pensión Monja Blanca.

Day 16. COBAN – SEMUC CHAMPEY – LANQUIN – COBAN

Today we travel to Semuc Champey, a national monument of Guatemala known for its beautiful springs, ponds and waterfalls. All of them go to the Cahabón River, which travels underground before emerging again at the surface. This site is of special importance to Mayan spirituality due to its abundance of flora and fauna, the connection between men and the forces and spirits of nature, teaching us to treat it with respect in order to maintain equilibrium. Here we can bathe and enjoy a traditional lunch.

After lunch visit the caves of Lanquín, a sacred site for the Mayans who believed them to be inhabited by the Chacs, divinities of the rain, and the nawales of the four cardinal points and the four colors of the Mayan cosmovision: red, black, white and yellow. In the Popul Wuj caves are seen as the entrance to Xib'alb'a, the underworld, a place of obscurity and death. Xib'alb'a is believed to have two principal entrances: caves and water bodies. Ceremonies to thank Ajaw (god) and ancestors are celebrated here.

Overnight: Plan A: Park Hotel.
 Plan B: Hotel Casa Duranta.
 Plan C: Pensión Monja Blanca.

Day 17. COBAN – CHISEC

Today we travel to Chisec, whose name has two interpretations: “place of the navaja” or “place of the trastos”. Evidence of Mayan inhabitation has been found in Chisec and surrounding areas. Here, at only 200 meters above sea level, we will begin an incredible adventure into the caves of Candelaria national park. Candelaria national park holds one of the paths of Xib'alb'a, made up of a system of mystical speleological caves that are a site of pilgrimage for descendants of the Mayans, considered to be the entrance to the underworld where souls rest. These caves were declared to be a cultural and eco-tourism complex due to their richness in flora, fauna and archaeological sites. In Candelaria we visit the caves Window of Safety and Dome of the Bats. The walk is of moderate to high level of difficulty, walking approximately 3.4 kilometers in a time of 3 to 5 hours.

We have lunch in the Candelaria visitors' center where you will enjoy a traditional dish of the region known as kaq'ik that is a soup made of turkey, corn tamales and white rice. The lunch will be prepared by women of q'eqchi' origin who are members of the Chisec Tourism Association (AGETUCHI are its initials in Spanish). The lunch is included.

After lunch you can enjoy a short rest before continuing to the Muqb'ilja community. Here we find the caves called Venado Seco and Mico, another path of Xib'alb'a, whose name is of special importance as it is considered the beginning of creation and the thread of time and life. Ceremonies of veneration are celebrated here and it is given great importance by to the Mayan cosmovision. We will walk half an hour along a track that requires moderate to high levels of effort to get to the Peña del Tigre Eco lodge where we will stay in two cabins with full sanitary services. At the end of the afternoon we visit the community and the house of music, whose group consists of eight people who will give us a 45 minute presentation. We recommend our visitors to leave a donation.

Overnight: Plan A: Eco lodge Peña del Tigre.
 Plan B: Eco lodge Peña del Tigre.
 Plan C: Eco lodge Peña del Tigre.

Day 18. CHISEC – CANCUEN – SAYACHE – FLORES ISLAND

After breakfast in the Eco lodge we travel to La Unión. Here we leave the vehicle and board a boat to travel to the ancient Mayan city (archaeological park) of Cancuén. Cancuén is considered a sacred site by the descendents of the Mayan q'eqchi'. It is believed to be inhabited by the Tz'ultaq'a (god of hills and valleys) and ceremonies that are performed here are principally related to the planting of maize. This city was governed by Tah Ak Chann, who converted it into a powerful city thanks to its economic development and trade in the classic Mayan period. From this site trade in jade and quetzal feathers (bird symbol of Guatemala) were controlled. Jade worksites, burials of kings and markers for the ancient Mayan ball game pelota have also been found. Besides you can visit a replica of a pre-Hispanic Mayan house and palaces that are in the process of being restored. In Cancuén we will see the investigation and restoration work being carried out by archaeologists. After lunch (not included) we head to Sayache, arriving at the end of the day in Flores, Peten.

Overnight: Plan A: Hotel Camino Real Petén.
 Plan B: Hotel Villa Maya.
 Plan C: Hotel Villa del Lago.

Day 19. FLORES ISLAND – TIKAL NATIONAL PARK

Without doubt Tikal is a place not to be missed. We will explore this impressive archeological site with a local certified guide. After about one hour's travel by road, we will walk for four hours through this world-wide renowned site. After lunch (included) there will be time to discover for yourself the beauty of its culture, that still survives today through its people. The grandness of the acropolis in Tikal, Peten, is the best exponent of the most expressive synthesis of what was the classic Mayan culture with its attention focused on religious activity. (Classic period 250-900 AC)

Overnight: Plan A: Jungle Lodge.
 Plan B: Tikal Inn.
 Plan C: Jaguar Inn.

Day 20. TIKAL NATIONAL PARK – GUATEMALA CITY

Early in the morning you will have the option to wander through the jungle (optional, not included) and explore the park with tranquility. In the afternoon a transfer will be ready to take you from Tikal to Flores, from where you will take a TAG domestic flight to Guatemala City with transfer to your Hotel.

Overnight: Plan A: Jungle Lodge.
 Plan B: Tikal Inn.
 Plan C: Jaguar Inn.

Day 21. GUATEMALA CITY

Free time and international flight back home.

If your flight is programmed for the afternoon you will have time to say goodbye to the Mayan culture visiting the Museo Ixchel and or the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, or any other of your interest.

End of Services.

Includes:

- Private transportation with a bilingual driver/guide during the 21 days of the itinerary.

- 20 nights double room occupancy on the hotels mentioned.
- Domestic flight between Guatemala City and Flores.
- Local guides for the tours
- Meals included in the itinerary
- 24 hour telephone assistance.
- Donation in addition to a fair payment to each community according to need with a minimum of 5% of the itinerary
- FIVE (5) % of the price = donation to the communities, according to need: in all communities we will deliver supplies/cash or payment for work. (The clients will deliver it in each community)
- All value-added taxes (I.V.A.) and tourist tax (INGUAT)

Excludes:

- Personal expenses.
- Entrance fees
- Tips to Drivers and Guides.
- Meals other than mentioned within the itinerary.
- International airfare to/from Guatemala and Airport taxes.
- Baggage portorage and other extras not specified.
- Personal travel/cancellation insurance

Price per person: (Prices are in USD)

Type of Plan	02 PAX	04 PAX	06 PAX	08 PAX
Plan A	3,225.00	2,565.00	2,400.00	2,350.00
Plan B	2,850.00	2,190.00	2,025.00	1,975.00
Plan C	2,450.00	1,750.00	1,610.00	1,560.00