

BELIZE - THE BEST OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND CUBA



TRIP CODE

LATSBOCA

DEPARTURE

Enquire for exact departure dates

DURATION

23 Days

LOCATIONS

Panama, Cuba, Guatemala, Belize, Mexico



INTRODUCTION

Explore the best of Central America visiting Panama, Cuba, Guatemala, Belize and Mexico on this 23-day journey, We start in fast-paced modern Panama city before heading to Old Havana with its tobacco plantations and its colourful streets. We continue into fascinating Guatemala, many a traveller's favourite, with its many colonial towns, pristine lakes and towering volcanoes. From Guatemala City we fly to the fascinating Mayan ruins of Tikal which for many years were hidden in the jungle before continuing into Belize, where you can explore the pristine jungle and islands. Finally we return into Mexico to sample the beaches and ancient ruins of Tulum on the Yucatan peninsula before finishing in Mexicio city.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrival in Panama City

On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details of our representative office.



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DAY 1: Arrival in Panama City

Panama City, Panama’s capital, is possibly the most cosmopolitan capital in Central America. It is a modern city framed by the Pacific Ocean and the man-made Panama Canal. The original city of Panama (Panama Viejo) was destroyed by fire in 1671. The city was rebuilt on a peninsula, 8kms from the original settlement. It is known as Casco Viejo (Old Quarter) and is the historic centre of Panama, with cobble-stoned streets and colonial buildings. The archaeological site of Panama Viejo and the historic district of Panama are both UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The banking district is a lively and vibrant sector of the city.



DAY 2: Full Day Panama City & Miraflores Locks


This morning we make our way to the Miraflores Locks. This is the canal’s busiest time when vessels are lifted or lowered 16 metres in the two distinct steps. We also visit the Museum and Visitor Centre to learn more about how this masterpiece of engineering was constructed, its history and its impact on global trade. From here we continue to the Amador Causeway and enjoy the incredible views of the canal and the city skyline before visiting a local restaurant on the causeway for lunch. After lunch we head to Casco Viejo, Panama City colonial quarter. Here we enjoy the colonial architecture, with its narrow roads, quaint houses and impressive churches. Finally we visit Panama Viejo, the old capital that was looted and destroyed by the notorious English buccaneer Henry Morgan in 1671 and subsequently abandoned. Today only ruins remain.



DAY 3: Depart Panama City

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.



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DAY 3: Flight from Panama City to Havana

In due time board your flight from Panama City to Havana.



DAY 3: Havana: Transfer Airport - Hotel

On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details of our representative office.



DAY 3: Havana

Cuba’s capital Havana is a vibrant city teeming with beautiful if sometimes shabby colonial buildings, once the most heavily fortified city in the Americas. The city was founded by the Spanish in the 16th century and it is now a diverse and fascinating mix of castles, fortresses and Spanish colonial buildings intermingled with modern high rises. The Old City (Habana Vieja), with its narrow streets and overhanging balconies is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the centre of the original city. Soak up the atmosphere as you sip on a Mojito, a refreshing blend of rum, lime, sugar, mint leaves, soda water and ice or maybe sample a Cuba Libre, made with rum, coke and lime.



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DAY 4: Havana - City Tour

Get ready to enjoy an action packed day in Cuba's capital city. First you will embark on a guided walking tour of Old Havana's Historic Centre, taking in sites such as the Plaza de Armas, Plaza San Francisco de Asis, Plaza Vieja and Plaza de la Catedral. Here, you'll visit some of Ernest Hemingway's hangouts, such as the Ambos Mundos Hotel, La Bodeguita del Medio and El Floridita bar. After a much needed lunch in a local restaurant, you will be met by your private car and taken on a panoramic tour of the city, first visiting La Cabaña Fortress for a view of old and modern Havana across the bay, then touring modern Havana, stopping at Revolution Square and the Capitol Building. Following a busy day, the evening is yours to relax in the hotel or sample some of Havana's world-class music.



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DAY 5: Havana - Day Tour to Vinales Valley

Today your local guide will take you on a tour of the Vinales Valley in Pinar del Rio in the Sierra de los Organos Mountains - where the world's best tobacco is grown. En-route visit a Cigar Factory to see how the famous Cuban cigars are made. Your guide will take you to visit the valley's famous Mogotes, including the Pre-Historic Mural, which reflects the geological history of the Sierra de los Organos, and the Indian Cave, where you can take a boat along the underground river. After lunch you will have some free time to explore Vinales. On the way back to Havana you will stop at the Los Jazmines lookout point to enjoy the incredible view of the valley. The evening is yours to relax or enjoy a night of Cuban music. Why not visit the Casa de La Musica in Miramar?



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DAY 6: Havana - Cienfuegos

After breakfast and check out, you will meet your local guide who will travel with you to Cienfuegos. On the way you will stop at 'Fiesta Campesina' on the Zapata Peninsula. The Zapata Peninsula is a National Park and UNESCO-declared Biosphere Reserve, covered by areas of wetland and dense forest. The Peninsula is a rich habitat for birds and other wildlife, including the mongoose and Cuban pygmy owl.



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DAY 6: Cienfuegos: City Tour

From here, you will continue on to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Cienfuegos for a guided tour of the Historic Centre and City Boulevard. With its French influences, Cienfuegos is known as the 'Pearl of the South' and has a spectacular setting around a natural bay. Drive along the bay to the Punta Gorda Peninsula for lunch at the Yacht Club.



DAY 6: Cienfuegos - Trinidad

At the appropriate time, continue to Trinidad where you will check into your hotel or private homestay.



DAY 7: Trinidad

Trinidad is another UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is a beautifully preserved Spanish colonial settlement built on the back of the sugar and slave trade. At the peak of the sugar industry there were 56 sugar mills in the region. The town is lined with cobble-stoned streets and mansions adorned with Italian frescoes.



DAY 7: Trinidad - City Tour

After breakfast at the hotel, you will meet your local guide for a walking tour of Trinidad visiting sites such as the Santander's family pottery and Trova House where a cocktail is included. You will also visit the market. After a traditional lunch in a local restaurant, travel along the famous Sugar Mills Valley to a former sugar hacienda. Returning to town later in the day, you will have some free time to explore the souvenir market or to take photos. At the end of the tour you return to your hotel where the evening is at leisure. You may like to wander down to the town square to listen to the troubadours strumming their guitars and watch the salsa dancing.



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DAY 8: Trinidad: Cayo Blanco

After breakfast you will be transferred to the marina for a Seafari catamaran excursion to Cayo Blanco. Once at the Cayo Blanco, the time is yours to snorkel, swim or relax on the beach. A full lunch and open bar is included in the tour.



DAY 9: Trinidad - Santa Clara - Havana

Today, you will have a private transfer to Havana. On the way your driver will stop in Santa Clara, allowing you to visit Che Guevara's Mausoleum. The Mausoleum is a memorial and houses the remains of Ernest "Che" Guevara as well as a huge bronze statue of him, erected in 1987 to mark the 20th anniversary of Guevara's murder in Bolivia. The adjacent museum houses a collection of photographs of Che as well as guns, medical equipment and letters. After lunch at a local restaurant, you will continue your journey to your hotel in Havana.



DAY 10: Havana: Transfer Hotel - Airport

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.



DAY 10: Flight from Havana to Guatemala City

In due time board your flight from Havana to Guatemala City.



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DAY 10: Arrival transfer in Antigua

Arrive in Guatemala City airport and transfer to Antigua by private vehicle. Free afternoon to explore this romantic town on your own.



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DAY 10: Antigua

Antigua is a beautiful old colonial city, the former capital of Central America and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city sits beneath three volcanoes, surrounded by coffee plantations and indigenous communities. The city is renowned for its Spanish colonial buildings including the baroque La Merced church with its ornate yellow and white façade. The streets are lined with pastel coloured buildings and churches, and the markets and plazas throb with activity.



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DAY 11: Antigua Walking City Tour

You will be met at your hotel reception by your private guide to begin your half day walking tour of Antigua. Your tour will cover the cultural, historical & social highlights of this colonial city with a behind-the-scenes look at some of the many ruined churches, convents, and cathedrals. Entrances are included to the Iglesia San Francisco, the Cathedral and La Merced Church. This tour is flexible and if you have specific sites that you wish to see please notify your guide. If you wish to visit other monuments you will need to pay the entrances directly.



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DAY 12: Private transfer Antigua - Panajachel

Transfer from Antigua to Lake Atitlan by private vehicle. There will be time to walk around famous Santander Street in Panajachel, which sits in an idyllic location overlooking Lake Atitlan and 3 huge volcano's - San Pedro, Atitlan and Toliman.



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DAY 12: Boat Tour to Santiago Atitlan

Optional afternoon boat trip on Lake Atitlan. Guests are picked up from their hotel & transferred to Santiago Village, which includes a 30min scenic boat ride across the lake past the three impressive volcanoes of Toliman, Atitlan & San Pedro. On arrival at Santiago guests will walk with their guide to find the house where the Maya God Maximon is living. Once with Maximon you may see local shaman performing rituals for local people and if you wish you may ask your guide to help you hire the services of a shaman for a personal ceremony. After visiting Maximon, guests can visit the local church and learn about the history of this very traditional town and also see the market and learn about the distinctive textiles and primitive art that is famous in this area. When guests are ready they will be transferred back to their hotel. Included: Private guide, private boat & entrances.



DAY 13: Chichicastenango Day Trip from Lake Atitlan

Your bilingual host driver will meet you at your hotel for the 1hr transfer out to the highland town of Chichicastenango. Along the way you will pass through the central highland region and see the local Maya people in their traditional dress going about their daily lives - working in the fields, collecting firewood, travelling between markets, selling their wares. On arrival at Chichicastenango your guide will take you to explore this famous market, both the local areas of fruit and vegetables and everyday items as well as the craft area where you can find an endless variety of beautiful textiles, wooden and ceramic crafts. Guests can also visit the famous St Tomas Church where local Maya people come to perform Maya rituals within the Catholic Church - demonstrating the interesting way the two faiths have combined in recent times. If guests want to they can also hike up the hill to the Pascual Abaj ritual site to see if any local shaman are performing rituals and/or to the cemetery on the outskirts of town. Lunch is provided. When guests are ready they will be driven back to Lake Atitlan to their hotel.



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DAY 14: Transfer to airport for your onward destination

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.



DAY 14: Flight from Guatemala City to Flores

In due time board your flight from Guatemala City to Flores.



DAY 14: Arrival transfer in Flores

Arrival at Mundo Maya airport and transfer to your Flores hotel.




DAY 14: Flores

DAY 15: Tikal Full Day Tour with Lunch

Guests are met at their hotel by a private guide for a tour of Tikal National Park, where some 3,000 ancient structures rise from the rainforest floor. Guests will follow in the footsteps of Maya royalty and commoners as our guide leads them to such sites as the majestic Great Plaza and its Temple of the Jaguar. Temple of the Masks, the Acropolis and much more. Lunch is provided at a local restaurant. Guests can also explore the museum at the visitor centre before returning to their hotel. Included : Private archaeology guide, private transfers, park admission fee, lunch. (Please note: There is no vehicle transfer for guests staying in Tikal Park.)



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DAY 16: Transfer Flores - Melchor de Mencos

You will be picked up at your hotel in Flores and Transferred to Melchor de Mencos (Guatemala Border).



DAY 16: Transfer Melchor de Mencos - Belize City

Private Transfer from Melchor de Mencos (Guatemala Border) to Belize City.



DAY 17: Transfer Belize City - Tulum (Mexico)

You will be met at the Belize city water taxi station and be transferred to Tulum (Mexico) in a private transportation.



DAY 17: Arrival in Tulum

The spectacular coastline of Tulum offers white sand beaches and turquoise blue waters with great diving and snorkelling opportunities. Tulum National Park is home to the most picturesque archaeological site in the Riviera Maya, built overlooking the sea. The ancient Mayan fortress city of Tulum dates back to the 13th century. Its most iconic structure, the clifftop Castillo was built as a watchtower, perched on the cliff-top overlooking the Caribbean Sea. The views from here of the Riviera Maya beaches, Caribbean Sea and the surrounding coastal region are spectacular.



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DAY 18: Free day in Tulum

Free day to enjoy the white sand beaches and pristine waters of Tulum.



DAY 19: Transfer: Tulum to Cancun

You will be picked-up at your hotel in Tulum and transferred to Cancun .



DAY 20: Cancun Free Day

Free day to enjoy the white sand beaches and pristine waters of Cancun.



DAY 21: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

You will be collected from your hotel at the appropriate time and transferred to the airport for your onward flight.



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DAY 21: Flight from Cancun to Mexico City

In due time board your flight from Cancun to Mexico City.



DAY 21: Arrival transfer in Mexico city

On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details of our representative office.



DAY 21: Half Day Mexico City Tour

This morning you will be collected from your hotel to explore magnificent Mexico City, built on top of the ruins of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. Our first stop is the Zocalo (main square), one of the biggest public squares in the world. Visit the Metropolitan Cathedral, the biggest church in Latin America, and the Palacio Nacional (closed on Mondays), which hosts Diego Rivera's murals depicting the history of Mexico. We then drive along the famous boulevard Paseo de la Reforma, built during the short-lived reign of Emperor Maximilian to connect the main square and his castle in Chapultepec. On completion of your tour, you will be taken to your hotel. Please note this is a small group tour and only operates daily except Mondays.



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DAY 22: Teotihuacan Pyramids and Guadalupe Shrine

This morning you will be collected from your hotel to visit the impressive archaeological site of Teotihuacan, located 50km northeast of Mexico City. On the way, stop at the “Plaza de las Tres Culturas”, where three cultures converge: Aztec, Spanish, and contemporary Mexican. Continue to the Shrine de Guadalupe, Latin America’s most revered religious shrine. It is here where the Virgin of Guadalupe is said to have appeared before an Indian named Juan Diego in 1531, and an image of her was miraculously emblazoned on his cloak. There is time to explore the New Basilica de Guadalupe (the Old Basilica, built in 1700, is slowly sinking) and to see Juan Diego’s cloak. Drive for another hour to Teotihuacan, one of the most impressive cities of the ancient world, held sacred by the Aztecs. Explore its temples, palaces and pyramids, including the Quetzalpapalotl Palace, the Pyramid of the Moon, and the immense Pyramid of the Sun, ranked among the biggest in the world. Shrine of Guadalupe not available to visit on December 11th and 12th. On completion of your tour, return to Mexico City and you will be taken to your hotel. Please note this is a small group tour.



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DAY 23: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS	
Accommodation	Standard

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Inclusions	Tours Airport transfers Accommodation Tours in the itinerary Domestic flights Transport All breakfasts Other meals where stated
	Exclusions Visa fees (if applicable) Personal expenses Optional activities not mentioned in itinerary Gratuities for staff/crew
Difficulty Rating	1 (easy)
Single Surcharge	Available upon request
Notes	Contact us for more details
Price Dependent upon	Season and availability

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SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you’re visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu’s “Pass it on” programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.
- 4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise your impact on both local environments and communities.
- 5) Chimu Adventures’ offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure’s internal processes are also structures to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.