

CENTRAL AMERICA ADVENTURE



TRIP CODE

MCTSCAA

DURATION

21 Days

LOCATIONS

Mexico, Guatemala, Belize



INTRODUCTION

Explore some of the highlights of Central America visiting Mexico, Belize and Guatemala on this 21-day adventure. We start in fast-paced Mexico City before heading south to the Mayan ruins of Palenque and colonial beauty of San Crist bal de la Casas. 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 to explore its jungle and islands. Finally we return into Mexico to sample the beaches of Tulum on the Yucatan peninsula.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Mexico City - Arrive & Transfer to 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.



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DAY 1: Mexico City


Mexico City lies in the heart of Central Mexico and is the capital of Mexico and the oldest capital city in the Americas. It is one of the largest cities in the world with over 20 million inhabitants (in the greater metropolitan area) and has a rich history and colourful culture.



DAY 2: 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. On completion of your tour, return to Mexico City and you will be taken to your hotel. This is a small group tour. Please note: Shrine of Guadalupe is not available to visit on March 21st or December 11th and 12th.



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DAY 3: Mexico City – Half Day City Tour

This morning we will explore the magnificent Mexico City, built on top of the ruins of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. You will collected from your hotel at 8.40am approximately. ***PLEASE NOTE:** This tour only operates Tuesday to Sunday The tour begins at 9.15am and our first stop is the Zocalo (main square), one of the biggest public squares in the world. We will visit the Catedral Metropolitana – the biggest church in Latin America, and the Palacio Nacional – 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.



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DAY 3: 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.



DAY 3: Villahermosa Transfer Airport to Palenque Hotel

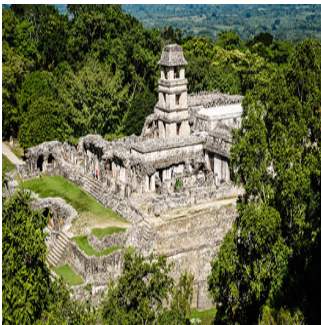
On arrival, please make your way through to the Arrivals Hall where our representative will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel. He/she will be holding a sign with your name on it. Should you not be able to locate them, please refer to the front of your itinerary for emergency contact details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



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DAY 4: Palenque archaeological site

We will visit the archaeological site of Palenque, a World Heritage Site, located 7km outside of the town of Palenque. Palenque flourished between AD600 and 800, when its influence extended throughout the basin of the Usumacinta river. The site, surrounded by rainforest where toucans and howler monkeys live, is made up of some 500 buildings spread over 15 sq km, of which only a few have been excavated. We will explore the magnificent ruins, including the Temple of the Inscriptions – the tallest and most stately of Palenque’s buildings, the Temple of the Sun – crowned with a prominent roof comb, The Palace – with its maze of corridors and rooms, and many other beautiful buildings.



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DAY 4: Palenque

Today, you will visit one of the most beautiful and emblematic landmarks of the classical Mayan culture - the ruins of the city of Palenque. The city’s highlights include the Temple of the Inscriptions, where an important burial chamber was discovered in the 1950s and the imposing architectural complex of El Palacio, one of the most beautiful constructions to be found in the entire environment of Maya culture.



DAY 5: Palenque to San Cristobal via Agua Azul

After breakfast, we will drive to Agua Azul, a place where over 500 cascades create incredible turquoise colored “pools” surrounded by the rainforest. After that, we will continue to San Cristobal de las Casas, drop off at your hotel.



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DAY 5: San Cristobal de las Casas

The Spanish colonial city of San Cristobal de las Casas is one of Mexico's most enamoured and photographed historic centres. It has often been likened to Antigua City in Guatemala or even Cusco in Peru, but there is no doubt that San Cristobal has a flavour of its own. While the centre does have a distinct stately Spanish feel, the indigenous influence is arguably stronger. Chiapas is home to several indigenous groups descended from the Maya, two of the largest being the Tzotzils and Tzeltals.



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DAY 6: San Cristobal city tour & visit to Indian Villages

We will explore on foot the colonial city center of San Cristobal de las Casas. We will visit the cathedral, on the north side of the pretty main square, with its lavish interior and gold-encrusted pulpit. We then walk a few blocks to the impressive 16th-century Dominican church Templo de Santo Domingo, with its intricate pink facade and gilded Baroque interior. We will have time to browse the handicraft market in front of the church, where Tzotzil Indians from the surrounding hills come to trade. We then drive 10km into the Chiapas highlands, to the Tzotzil Indian villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan. The Tzotzils descend from the ancient Maya and maintain some unique customs, costumes and beliefs. We will visit the beautiful white church in San Juan Chamula. The candles incense and chanting worshippers make a powerful impression. We then drive to the nearby village of Zinacantan, with its pretty church and handicraft market, allowing time to explore. Return to San Cristobal. **Please note: The Temple of Santo Domingo and the Cathedral of San Cristobal are currently closed for renovations and will be viewed from the outside only.



DAY 7: San Cristobal de las Casas - La Mesilla Border

Transfer from San Cristobal de las Casas to La Mesilla Border (Guatemala).



NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

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DAY 7: Transfer La Mesilla to Lake Atitlan

Transfer from La Mesilla Border to Lake Atitlan.



DAY 7: Lake Atitlan - Boat Transfer

DAY 7: Lake Atitlan

Lake Atitlan is a volcanic lake in the Guatemalan Highlands of the Sierra Madre mountain range. It is the deepest lake in Central America and one of the most beautiful lakes in the world, with 3 volcanoes rising out of its southern waters. The lake is surrounded by many villages where the Maya culture is still prevalent and traditional dress still worn. The Maya people of Atitlan are predominantly Tz'utujil and Kaqchikel. Santiago Atitlan is the largest of the lakeside communities, noted for its worship of Maximón, a folk saint represented by an effigy.




DAY 8: Santiago Half Day Tour

Hotel pickup, transfer to Santiago Village. You will take a 30 minute scenic boatride past the three impressive volcanoes of Toliman, Atitlan & San Pedro. Upon arrival you will visit the house where the Maya God, Maximon is living. His location changes every year. You can see a Shaman performing rituals on local people, visit a church and learn the history of the traditional village, visit the local market to learn of local crafts. When you are ready you will be transferred from Lake Atitlan to Antigua.



DAY 9: Lake Atitlan - Boat Transfer

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DAY 9: Chichicastenango Market & Transfer to Antigua

Guests are met at their hotel by their English speaking, private driver (Who will be their host for the day) for the 1hr transfer out to the highland town of Chichicastenango. Along the way guests 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, traveling between markets, selling their wares. Upon arrival at Chichicastenango you can explore this famous market escorted by your driver - both the local areas of the fruit & vegetables & everyday items as well as the craft area where you can find endless variety of beautiful textile, wooden & 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 they want to guests 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 and when guests are ready they will be transferred onto Antigua (Approx 2,5hr).



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DAY 9: 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 10: Antigua Walking 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.



DAY 11: Transfer to the airport for onward destination

Private transfer from Antigua to Guatemala City airport for your departure flight.



DAY 11: Flight from Guatemala City to Flores


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



DAY 11: Arrival transfer in Flores

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



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DAY 12: Tikal Full Day Tour

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 13: Transfer Flores - Melchor de Mencos

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



DAY 13: Transfer Guatemala Border - Cayo Dct. (Chaa Creek)

Private transfer from the Belize border to your hotel in the outer area of Cayo District.



DAY 14: Cayo District: Free Day

Today you are free to relax and enjoy the pure air and the beauty of the wonderful Belizean Rainforest.



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DAY 15: Transfer Cayo District - Airport

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



DAY 15: San Ignacio to Caye Caulker

In due time board your Domestic flight to Caye Caulker (1hr).



DAY 15: Transfer Caye Caulker - Seaside Cabanas


Arrival in Caye Caulker and Transfer to Seaside Cabanas resort.



DAY 15: Caye Caulker

The island of Caye Caulker lies off the coast of Belize. It is a small, sandy island within easy reach of Belize’s World Heritage listed barrier reef and an ideal base for snorkelling and diving. With golf carts and bicycles as the only means of transport on the island – it is a great place to relax and unwind to the musical beat of the island’s Rastafarian culture. The island is fringed by white sand beaches and surrounded by clear blue waters and the mangroves on the northern part of the island are home to a vast array of birds.



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DAY 16: Caye Caulker Free Day

Free day in Caye Caulker at your leisure.



DAY 17: Caye Caulker Free Day

Free day in Caye Caulker at your leisure.



DAY 18: Transfer Seaside Cabanas - Caye Caulker


Transfer from Seaside Cabanas to Caye Caulker.



DAY 18: Fly from Caye Caulker to Corozal

Flight from Caye Caulker Airport to Corozal.



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DAY 18: Transfer Corozal to Chetumal

Transfer by land from Corozal to Chetumal.
 *Please note border fees not included.



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DAY 18: Transfer Chetumal - Riviera Maya

Transfer from Chetumal to Riviera Maya (Mexico).



DAY 18: 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.



DAY 19: Free day in Tulum

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



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DAY 20: Transfer: Tulum to Cancun

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



DAY 20: Welcome to Cancun

Cancun was once a small and remote fishing village, not much more than a sand bar clinging to Mexico’s Caribbean coast. In the 1970’s the government saw the appeal of the area’s shimmering clear turquoise waters and pristine white sand, largely untouched since the mysterious decline of the Mayan Empire around the 13th century. Today, Cancun is an exciting beach destination and gateway to the Mundo Maya, or Maya World. Its strategic location makes it a major gateway to the Mayan World and the Caribbean. With its miles of pristine white sand beaches and crystal clear turquoise waters and its proximity to legendary archaeological sites such as Tulum and Chichen Itza, Cancun is unequalled in its ability to offer cultural gems, natural beauty and infinite activities.



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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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation	Hotels
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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	2 (Light adventure)
Single Surcharge	Standard category from US\$1803
Notes	There is a huge range of resort accommodation available in Cancun/ Playa del Carmen area. Ask your sales consultant about some of the options.
Price Dependent upon	Season and flight 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

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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.

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