



fact finder

GENERAL

Tour Code: DCA
Duration: 13 nights / 14 days
Joining City: Cancún, Mexico
Departure City: Antigua, Guatemala
Nearest International airport (joining / departing): Cancún / Guatemala City (Guatemala City is 45kms from Antigua - please make sure that you flight departs from Guatemala City, *Guatemala*, NOT Antigua in the Caribbean)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- **Accommodation:** 13 nights in hotels & cabins
- **Meals:** Some lunches
- **Excursions:** Tulum, Tikal & Copán ruins; Caye Caulker, Livingston
- **Transport:** Tucan vehicle, boat, on foot
- **Group:** Average 15 – 24; max 34
- **Age:** Recommended 18 – 55, although we do take older passengers provided they can harmonise with the group
- **Staff:** Tucan tour leader, Tucan driver, local guides

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- **Local Payment**
- International flights & departure tax (see Mexico Country Dossier for current price)
- Border taxes – Many of these taxes depend on the time of day and how the immigration officials are feeling that day! The following is a guideline; if you entered Mexico by air there should be no land exit tax (otherwise US\$20), departing Belize US\$19, departing Guatemala - between US\$1 and \$3, entering Honduras - US\$2. This is all subject to change, and your tour leader will provide current information.
- Tips on included excursions, visas, travel insurance, personal items, other tips
- Pre & post tour accommodation
- Airport transfers
- Spending money – allow US\$25-30 per day to cover meals, snacks, drinks, limited souvenirs, laundry and any extras (see the relevant Country Dossier for advice on how to carry your funds)
- **Optional Excursions** - Please see our Optional Excursions Guide (available from www.tucantravel.com) for a comprehensive list of optional activities and excursions available on this tour.

DISCLAIMER

This dossier is correct at the time of the 'Last Updated' date. On occasion we may need to update this dossier and it may be different to the information printed in our current brochure. Please make sure to visit our website and review a copy of your dossier as close to your departure as possible in case there have been any changes.

and caves. There are many optional excursions on offer; from canoeing down the river or tubing through caves to visiting the nearby Maya site of Caracol- the biggest in Belize - now in the process of being excavated!

A short drive now takes us to the Guatemalan border, the most colourful country in Central America and home to some of the region's friendliest people. Our first stop is quaint island-town of Flores, situated in the centre of Lake Peten Itzá, which was the last town to be conquered by the Spanish. After a night spent

Brief Overview

This is the perfect tour to give you an amazing insight into these four countries and offers a wide variety of sights and activities. Beaches, jungles, ruins and wildlife are just a small selection of what's available on this adventure. We include several excursions along the way (see the Factfinder box). If you require a longer or shorter tour, Tucan's modular tour structuring offers you the flexibility to see Latin America your way. See our brochure or website for other itinerary options.

Itinerary

DAY 1, Arrive Cancún – You start the tour in Cancún. Until 1970 this city was just a small fishing village, but now due to its beautiful beaches, it attracts over 2 million visitors a year. You can relax on one of the sumptuous beaches and swim in the turquoise waters. If you arrive a few days early there are several different optional excursions on offer, one of which is a ferry out to the attractive island of Isla de Mujeres - where you can go snorkelling, tour the island in a golf-cart or simply sip cocktails and swing on 'bar swings' on the beach.

DAYS 2–5, Tulum – Bacalar – Belize City - Caye Caulker – We take the short drive south to the small but picturesque Maya/Toltec site of Tulum, dating from the 12th century, one of the few Maya sights found on the coast. It sits directly on top of the cliffs overlooking the Caribbean Sea. You will have time to wander the ruins and swim at the beach while your tour leader prepares your lunch. We now continue south to the little village of Bacalar located on shores of the Laguna de Siete Colores. Ideal for swimming, the lake's name comes as a result of the mix of salt and fresh water which creates 7 different hues of colour when the sun sets on the horizon.

After a just a few days we depart Mexico and continue our journey south to one of Central

America's smallest countries, Belize, formally known as British Honduras. The official language is still English but almost everyone also speaks Spanish. Shortly after arriving in Belize City we take a speedboat out to Caye (island) Caulker. This is a great place to relax, with favourite sayings like "No problem" and "Go slow". There are no cars on the island, only bikes and golf buggies. Here you can throw away your shoes to wander the sandy streets, bars and restaurants. We spend two full days here and there are optional snorkelling and scuba diving trips that can be arranged. One tour goes to Hol-Chan Marine Reserve where you will snorkel amongst a variety of colourful marine life.

Another excursion takes you to see the local manatees (also known as sea cows), also stopping to snorkel. Lunch is usually at a secluded island with one lone palm tree, where you can have your guide cook you a delicious BBQ lunch. Most tours also include a stop at shark and ray alley. Qualified divers can explore the so-called bottomless "Blue Hole" made famous by the explorer Jacques Cousteau. (Please note: this optional excursion does not go every day). A popular pastime on Caye Caulker is to just sit quietly on one of the island's docks watching the tide going out. Evenings may be spent eating fresh lobster and prawns, sipping on coconut rum and pineapple cocktails and listening to reggae music with the friendly locals...

DAYS 6–10, San Ignacio – Flores – Tikal - Rio Dulce – Livingston – After returning by boat to the mainland, we rejoin our Discovery vehicle and drive across the centre of the country, to San Ignacio where we spend 2 nights. This attractive town is also known as "Cayo" and is an agricultural centre serving the areas many citrus and peanut farms. It is also known as the 'adventure' and 'nature' capital of Belize, being surrounded by jungle, wildlife, waterfalls, rivers

here, we drive the short distance to the incredible jungle Maya site of Tikal, which was regarded as the greatest city of the Maya world. This complex is one of the biggest Maya sites discovered and will take much of the day to explore. Today the main centre covers an area of approx. 2½ square kilometres but at its pinnacle the city stretched for nearly 100 kilometres. As you approach the site, you may see several tall mounds, which are temples that have not yet been excavated. The highest Maya temple is found at Tikal (70 metres). The emphasis was on height when creating these imposing structures because the Maya believed the higher the building the closer they were to the gods. Tikal is also rich in animal life, such as the Howler Monkey that was sacred to the Maya, the pizote - a racoon-like animal, bird life such as toucans and, if you're very lucky you may even see a jaguar!

We head south through the Maya Biosphere Reserve. This sparsely populated area is part of the largest protected tropical forest area in Central America. At certain times of the year sumptuous mangoes can be bought from roadside vendors. Other products farmed in the area are spices, timber and chicle (tree sap used in the production of chewing gum), many of them going for export. Upon arrival to the town of Rio Dulce we catch a boat over to our cabins which sit right on the water, surrounded by lush rainforest. The following day we take a boat tour to Livingston, experiencing some of the most beautiful scenery imaginable along this 23-kilometre stretch of waterway. Livingston is situated at the mouth of the Rio Dulce and is inhabited by the Garifuna people. This lively town has a Caribbean atmosphere different to the rest of Guatemala and is a great place to eat lobster or coconut prawns and listen to the local African-style 'punta' music. We return up the Rio Dulce to spend one more night in the lodge and then rejoin our vehicle and continue south.

DAYS 11–13, Copán Ruins – Antigua – We make a lunch stop at the small and special ruins of Quirigua, known for having some of the tallest stelaes (statues) in the Maya world - the tallest of which is 12m high and features on the 10c Guatemalan coin. After driving through fertile river valleys and banana plantations we cross into the drier lands of the 'lone cowboy' headed for the Honduras border. Only 20 minutes drive from the border is the attractive village of Copán Ruinas. Within walking distance of the village is one of the best kept and most interesting of all the ancient Maya sites. See the intricately carved stelaes depicting the 16 rulers of this once magnificent city, the wonderful staircase, ball courts and huge main plaza. Fantastic optional excursions to hot springs and horse-riding/trekking tours can be organised locally for the afternoon.

We now head back to Guatemala, passing the outskirts of Guatemala City and arriving in the former capital, Antigua, one of the most attractive towns in Central America. Here you will see the local indigenous population in their colourful costumes, selling their textiles in the cobbled streets and plazas. It is also the cultural centre of Guatemala, an ideal place to experience the traditional music, architecture and art of the country. Rich in ornate churches, convents, parks, plazas, cafés, restaurants, bars and colourful street markets and surrounded by three

awe-inspiring volcanoes, Antigua is one place you will never forget.

DAY 14, Depart Antigua

Very little time is spent in the starting and finishing cities on the tour and you will need to allow a few days at the beginning and end of your tour if you want to explore these cities. For details of pre and post tour accommodation bookings (which should be made at the time of your tour booking) please refer to our current brochure.

Please note: The itinerary listed above is to be used as a guide only and our tour leaders may need to make adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances. The tour leader will also try to be in the best place for local holidays and festivals etc. We endeavour to incorporate any permanent changes into our Trip Dossiers and, as such, the itinerary may vary slightly from the one printed in the brochure. To make sure you have the most up to date copy please download the very latest version from our website just before travelling.

About Discovery Tours

Our Discovery Tours are exciting, action packed private transport journeys for travellers who are young at heart and seeking a great value trip with a high quality of service. If you enjoy group travel with the added flexibility of being on a private vehicle and the comfort and assurance of competent personal guiding, then this style of trip is perfect for you!

Don't forget that Tucan also offer two other tour styles: Adventure Tours which use public transport for a real 'hands on' experience and Overland Expeditions (in South America only), which usually have a high percentage of camping, travel by overland truck and suit travellers who love the great outdoors.

Local Payment

The cost of all Tucan tours includes a compulsory 'Local Payment' (see Factfinder above), which is in addition to the price you pay to your travel agent. **The Local Payment MUST be paid to your Tour leader in full in US\$ cash at the pre-departure meeting on the first day of your tour.** The local payment is administered by our tour leaders and no refunds can be made for any unused services or if you decide to leave the tour early.

Please note; the Local Payment is in no way a 'kitty'. To avoid confusion, we no longer have a kitty system for tips and taxes as we have found that most people prefer to pay their own tips and taxes individually as they go along.

Pre-Departure Meeting

The address of your joining hotel can be found on your joining letter and tour voucher. On arrival you should look for a Tucan information sheet on the hotel notice board where you will find details for your pre-departure meeting. The tour leader and driver will normally hold the pre-departure meeting on the afternoon/evening of Day 1 (assuming all clients have arrived). Your tour leader will give a briefing about the tour, outline the plan for the next few days, answer any questions and collect your Local Payment in full in US\$ cash. Then there will usually be the

option for everyone to go out for dinner and drinks to start to get to know one another.

Tour Personnel

Discovery Tours use a variety of different styles of leadership in order to maximize your enjoyment and experiences. On this tour you will have a combination of Tucan tour leader, Tucan driver, and local guides. The Tucan Tour leader accompanies your tour and Tucan driver is responsible for transporting you safely and maintaining the vehicle. Local guides will lead your included and optional excursions.

Degree of Difficulty/ Fitness

Discovery Tours suit people who are relatively fit and healthy. Although no experience is required there is occasional moderate walking at medium altitude.

There are plenty of pyramids (and volcanoes in Guatemala) which you can climb (optional), although most are fairly high and steep, so can be demanding.

The altitude shouldn't be too much of a problem for most people, as the highest we travel throughout the tour is approximately 2,335 metres above sea level, which is not considered high in terms of altitude sickness.

Pre-Departure Information

Once you have booked the tour (paid your deposit), your travel agent will provide you with a detailed pre-departure booklet, with in-depth information to help you prepare. If you do not receive your pre-departure information shortly after booking your tour please consult your travel agent. After you have paid for your tour in full you will also receive from your travel agent: a local map & joining letter for your arrival city, your tour voucher and transfer voucher (if applicable – see below).

Country Dossiers

This Trip Dossier is designed to be read in conjunction with our Mexico, Belize, Honduras and Guatemala Country Dossiers which you can download from our website or obtain from your booking agent. The Country Dossiers contain essential information about visas, arrival transfers, spending money & costs, taxes & tips, climate, local food etc.

What you need to bring

A full list of suggested equipment can be found in the pre-departure booklet. Large or rigid suitcases are totally unsuitable for these tours as they often cause problems in vehicle packing. Smaller cases with wheels and a vertical handle (the type which will fit into an overhead bin on an airline) are acceptable as your main luggage but do have a tendency to break easily. A towel is optional as you can quite often use hotel towels, however if you prefer your own bring it along. Alternatively, a sarong is highly recommended as it can also be used in place of a towel.

You will need comfortable walking shoes. Teva/Reef style sandals are suitable for most of

the tour although hiking boots are necessary if you plan to do an optional volcano trek.

Transfers

We are no longer offering airport transfers in Cancún or Antigua due to the ease, availability and cheapness of local transport. Please see the Mexico & Guatemala Country Dossiers for further information.

Accommodation

This tour includes 13 nights accommodation in hotels and cabins (Rio Dulce). Many have swimming pools or are situated by a lake or river.

All hotels are chosen for their central locality, security, friendliness, cleanliness and ambiance. Although sometimes simple, you will find clean comfortable rooms with mostly en-suite facilities (occasionally bathrooms may be shared but this is rare), and often a bar and restaurant are attached or close by. All rooms will be allocated on a share basis, usually in twins or triples (depending on the male/female ratio) and on rare occasions, multi-share rooms

Transport

Transportation on this tour will be a modern fully air-conditioned local coach. Some privately hired vehicles may also be used on occasion. On all Tucan vehicles you will find superior comfort, from our carpeted interiors with curtained and tinted windows, modern reclining coach seats, overhead storage shelves, writing tables, a small library (which you can use and add to) and a stereo cassette player for the groups use. Most vehicles also have a refrigerator for cold drinks and food. There will also be plenty of storage space for your luggage and souvenirs as well as kitchen equipment, tables and camp stools for picnic lunches. Tucked away will be specialised equipment for the maintenance and upkeep of the vehicle. On rare occasions it may be necessary to utilise a privately hired vehicle for the duration of the tour. Although modern and comfortable, these vehicles may not include all the facilities and equipment listed above. Excursions may also include travel by local bus, mini-bus, boats and trains.

Meals

Lunches are included on days travelling between hotels (see below for meal guideline). The food on travelling days is purchased at local markets and is prepared by group members under the guidance of your tour leader. The lunches usually consist of cold meats, cheeses, salad, bread and fruit (drinks are not included). Please see the relevant Country Dossier for more information about the local food.

Tour Highlights

- Orientation walks – Introductory walks conducted by your expedition leader at each main stopover.
- Cancún – Mexico's famous coastal resort with Isla Mujeres as an added attraction.
- Tulum – Coastal Maya-Toltec ruins; spectacular cliff-top setting right above a breathtaking pure white sand beach.
- Bacalar - on shores of the Laguna de Siete Colores with the nearby Cenote Azul (a 70 metre deep well).

- Caye Caulker – Sandy islet with no traffic; options to dive, snorkel or relax.
- San Ignacio – Rainforest where jungle excursions can be arranged along the Macal River.
- Tikal – Beautiful Maya ruins set in the heart of the jungle with howler monkeys screeching nearby.
- Flores – A charming town situated on island in the middle of Lake Peten Itza.
- Rio Dulce - Boat ride from here to Livingston on the Caribbean coast.
- Copán – The most southerly of the Maya ruins rich in hieroglyphics, stelae, sculptures, pyramids and a ball-court.
- Antigua – One of the most beautiful colonial towns in the Americas

Day to Day Itinerary & Meals

Day 1 – Arrive Cancún (Mexico)

Day 2 – Drive to Bacalar, L

Day 3 – Drive to Belize City, boat to Cayes (Belize),

Day 4 – Visiting Caye Caulker

Day 5 – Visiting Caye Caulker

Day 6 – Drive San Ignacio, pm free time, L

Day 7 – San Ignacio – free time/options

Day 8 – Drive to Flores, pm freetime (Guatemala),

Day 9 – Tikal ruins, drive to Rio Dulce, L

Day 10 – Rio Dulce- boat trip to Livingston

Day 11 – Drive across to Copán (Honduras), L

Day 12 – Copán - visit ruins

Day 13 – Drive to Antigua (Guatemala), L

Day 14 – Depart Antigua

(B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D - Dinner included)

Please note the day to day itinerary and meal outline above is given as a **GUIDELINE ONLY**.

IMPORTANT INFO

It is very important that you check the "Latest News" section on our website before you travel.

This page contains information about any natural disasters, political unrest, travel advice and regulation changes (e.g. Inca Trail permits) that may affect your tour.

<http://www.tucantravel.com/information/Tour+Info/Latest+News/2/67>