

Looking to Prepare Your Next Vacation? 10 Incredible Reasons to Visit Guatemala

It doesn't get as much hype as its neighbors, but Guatemala is a star on its own. From the pristine beaches to lush jungles, there's endless beauty to see here.

It's no surprise that nearly 2 million tourists visit each year.

Besides the spectacular scenery, there's a fascinating culture and history. Whether you volunteer or attend a festival, Guatemala has a way of enriching lives. The food isn't bad, either.

Are you planning a Central American getaway? Make sure that Guatemala is on your list. Here are eight amazing things to do in Guatemala.

1. Infamous Coffee Beans

There's a reason the biggest coffee chains in the world source beans from Guatemala. The beans grown here are unique and high-quality. One of the hot spots in Guatemala for producing beans is Antigua.

A traditional Antiguan coffee bean is full-bodied and smoky. It has an intensely rich flavor that doesn't need assistance from cream or sugar.

As a visitor to the country, exploring a coffee plantation will be a highlight of your trip. Explore the *fincas* and see how their infamous beans get produced. You'll even get to sample different brews and take some home.

2. Gorgeous Lakes

Guatemala has over 100 lakes dotting the country's landscape. The most popular and well-known is Lake Atitlán.

Lake Atitlán formed in the basin of a volcano. It erupted 84 000 years ago, leaving behind a massive caldera which filled with river water.

Tourists can hike to Lake Atitlán and explore its surrounding wilderness. You can also take a shuttle or taxi to the lake and then explore on foot.

3. Yummy Traditional Cuisine

You won't go hungry in Guatemala, nor will you want to. The cuisine is quintessentially Central American, with a Guatemalan flair.

Prepare your palate for corn tamales, chili rellenos, and chicken pepián. Corn, chilis, and beans are the main ingredients in most Guatemalan dishes.

The largest farmers market in Central America is in Guatemala, the Chichicastenango Market. Here you'll find hundreds of vendors selling food, home goods, textiles, and more. You could spend the day wandering around these lively corridors.

It's the perfect spot to pick up some souvenirs or sample the traditional Mayan cuisine.

4. The Ancient Mayan Ruins

The majority of Guatemalans originate from the Mayans. It's one of the few places in the world where indigenous people hold the majority population.

You can see evidence of the ancient Mayans all over Guatemala.

One of the most popular places to visit is the Tikal Ruins. After hiking three hours in the jungle, you'll come upon a spectacular stone pyramid, Tikal.

You may recognize it from one of the original *Star Wars* movies. George Lucas thought it was so mystical that he used Tikal for the setting of a different planet. You'll also notice other-worldly creatures like tarantulas and pisotes.

5. Adventure Tourism

Adrenaline junkies, rejoice! Guatemala has some of the best adventure tours in the world. If you want to get your blood racing and heart pumping, pack your outdoor gear.

Amidst the acres of the untouched jungle are over 37 volcanos, some active, some not. Most will require strenuous hiking so wear proper attire.

Speaking of hiking, make sure you check out Semuc Champey. This 300-metre limestone bridge is surrounded by lush jungle and turquoise waters. You can snorkel, swim, scuba dive, and even explore underwater caves.

El Mirador National Park is also worth seeing if you can afford five days of hiking to get there. Or, hop on a helicopter tour to shorten the trek. You'll get to witness the ancient El Mirador Mayan ruins, a site that few venture to see.

6. Tons of Volunteer Opportunities

Some tourists come to Guatemala with altruistic intent. There are hundreds of charity organizations that operate in Guatemala. Many have awesome volunteer programs.

One of the most compelling organizations is The Turtle Conservation Program. Sea turtles are at drastically

endangered due to human interference and pollution.

Volunteers can help in the hatchery with sea turtle eggs. Or, work on the beach protecting the nested eggs from intruders. Volunteers are integral to the work that biologists and conservationists do in Guatemala.

7. Lively Festivals

Guatemala has plenty of celebrations year-round for you to take part in. Besides the Christmas holidays, there's Independence Day, All Souls Day, and more.

Every year on Dia de la Independencia, Guatemalans spend weeks celebrating. The country gets adorned in blue and white and hosts many fiestas. There are military parades, fireworks, and fairs.

All Souls Day is similar to Day of the Dead in Mexico in which Guatemalans celebrate their ancestors. The Roman Catholic Church builds a float to parade the streets. Families decorate and repair their relative's tombstones and graves.

8. Bursting with Biodiversity

Guatemala has an abundance of biodiversity in its jungles and lakes. Step off the beaten path and you're likely to run into a Guatemalan creature.

Expect to see toucans, armadillos, spider monkeys, and vampire bats. As for predators, there are jaguars and panthers in the jungles.

Half of the forests in Guatemala are considered "primary forests". This means they have one of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world.

The Guatemalan people are passionate about protecting their

wildlife and biodiversity. The UN Environment Organization works closely with Guatemala to keep these spaces safe.

Interested in Learning More Things to Do in Guatemala?

This gorgeous and welcoming country is a must for any Central American traveler. Looking for affordable accommodation, adventure tourism, and amazing cuisine? Then look no further than Guatemala.

Besides having a riveting history, Guatemala's people and culture are lively and festive. Enjoy one of the annual festivals and get to know the local community.

There are endless things to do in Guatemala. The longer your trip, the better!

If you're ready to plan your vacation, make sure you book a tour with Martsam Travel. Our experienced tour guides will take you to all the best insider spots. Safety and security are our biggest concerns, next to making sure you have an amazing time.

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