

GUATEMALA & BELIZE

19 FEBRUARY – 5 MARCH 2026

FROM
£7,875
PER PERSON

Tour Leader: Tom & Libby Owen Edmunds


The Ultimate
TRAVEL COMPANY



This fascinating tour explores the intriguing world of the Maya, the classical civilization whose empire extended through a sizeable portion of Central America, including Guatemala and Belize. Our journey encompasses not only significant Mayan archaeological sites but also charming towns, magnificent and diverse scenery and the colourful culture of the region. We begin in Guatemala with the charming colonial town of Antigua, before moving to the natural beauty and Indian villages of Lake Atitlan, Chichicastenango with its wonderful market, and the spectacular ruins at Tikal, and Yaxha. We then cross into Belize to explore the dramatic Mayan remains, great natural beauty and wildlife around the Mountain Pine Ridge, before ending our tour with a three-night stay at a delightful hotel on the white sand beaches of Ambergris Caye on the Caribbean coast of Belize.



Cobble streets of Antigua



El Convento Boutique Hotel



Lake Atitlán

15 - DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 19 FEBRAURY 2026

19 February London / Miami / Guatemala City / Antigua

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) with British Airways via Miami departing London Heathrow at 09.35 hrs and arriving in Guatemala City at 19.28 hrs. On arrival, group transfer to Antigua, the former capital of Guatemala, where three nights are spent at the charming colonial El Convento Boutique Hotel, located right in front of the Capuchinas Convent and only a few minutes' walk from the central plaza. Dinner under own arrangements.

20 February Antigua

Morning at leisure to relax.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon walking tour of Antigua, a colonial gem built 1,500 metres above sea-level. It was largely destroyed by the Santa Marta Earthquake in 1776 but its principal monuments are still preserved as ruins. The 'new' city, built on a grid plan inspired by the Italian Renaissance, then amassed a number of superb buildings in less than three centuries and has now been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Stroll along cobblestone streets to visit Antigua Cathedral, Merced Monastery and San Francisco Monastery and see elegant baroque buildings and former private houses – many of them roofless! Dinner at a local restaurant.

21 February Antigua

Day spent exploring the local villages around Antigua. Visit the mountain town of Santa María, notice that many indigenous women still wear traditional Mayan dress (traje). Depart for the town of San Miguel Escobar where you will meet a farmer who owns a small independent coffee plantation and promotes environmentally responsible agriculture.

Traditional lunch the farm with the farmer and his family. Enjoy a tour of the farm to learn about the planting and harvesting process. Brief stop at an organic macadamia farm in San Miguel before ending the day at a weaving cooperative in San Antonio, watching women use traditional back-strap looms to create brightly coloured, intricate textiles. Return to the hotel for dinner under own arrangements.

22 February Antigua / Lake Atitlán

Depart for Chichicastenango or 'Chichi' to explore the market. Thursdays and Sundays are market days and people from nearby areas bring fruits, flowers, seeds, handicrafts, dresses and 'rebozos' (shawls) to sell. The day before, a labyrinth of stalls are set up around St Thomas Church. At sundown, the rituals begin – prayers are said and incense lit to carry messages to the indigenous people's beloved gods. Visit the 16th Century Roman Catholic St Thomas Church.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit the cemetery on the outskirts of town, where the mausoleums are painted in vivid colours, to witness a Mayan Ceremony. The ceremonies usually have several intentions, including health, fertility, protection, safe travels, or success. Continue to Lake Atitlán stopping in the highlands on the way to participate in a Mayan ritual with a Shamen. Check into the Hotel Atitlan where two nights are spent. With picturesque views of the volcanoes San Pedro, Tolimán, and Atitlán, this hacienda-style hotel was once a working coffee plantation located on the shores of Lake Atitlán. Dinner at the hotel.

23 February Lake Atitlán

Morning boat tour of the lake including a visit to the village of San Juan La Laguna. Visit a textile co-operative and see the natural dying techniques from locally grown plants and flowers and traditional weaving methods. Visit Naif painters in their homes and workshops.

Continue to Santiago for lunch at a local restaurant. Visit the statue of Maximón, also known as San Simón, who represents light and dark. He is considered a trickster—both a womanizer and protector of virtuous couples. It is considered the highest honour to host him. He is brought out during Holy Week and paraded through the streets before being placed in a different home for the following year. Return to the hotel. Dinner at a local restaurant.



Templo del Gran Jaguar



Mayan Shaman



Xibalba

24 February Lake Atitlán / Tikal

Depart for the famous Maya archaeological site of Iximché. Iximché ("corn tree") was once the capital of the Maya K'aq'chiquel who created a unique cultural blend for more than three centuries until they were defeated by the Spanish conquistadors in 1524. The site comprises partially excavated temples, ceremonial plazas, and ball courts, and is still used by Maya shamans today for sacred rituals.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Transfer to Guatemala City for a domestic flight to Flores. On arrival, transfer to Las Lagunas Boutique Hotel, situated around the shores of the peaceful Quexil Lagoon in a tropical nature reserve, where two nights are spent. Dinner under own arrangements.

25 February Tikal

Full day is spent exploring Tikal National Park, an ancient ruin of the Maya civilization, located in the Petén Basin region of the Maya lowlands. Once home to an estimated at 50,000 residents or more, Tikal flourished from 800 BC to 900 AD. The Carnegie Institution conducted archaeological excavations here from 1926 through 1937, led by Oliver Ricketson. The excavations added greatly to knowledge of the early Classic and pre-Classic Maya. The remains of several badly ruined late Classic era temple-pyramids were removed,

revealing well preserved earlier temples underneath them. See the majestic Great Plaza and its Temple of the Jaguar, the Temple of the Masks and the Acropolis.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Return to the hotel for dinner.

26 February Tikal / Mountain Pine Ridge

Morning at leisure. Depart the hotel for Yaxha. Located on the shores of Lake Yaxha, it is a sanctuary to Moreletti crocodiles, howler and spider monkeys, and a myriad of birds.

Lunch in a local restaurant. Gentle climb up one of the temples for a panoramic view of the rainforest canopy, nearby pyramids, and two shimmering lakes. Take a short boat trip across the lake to the ruins of Topoxte, one of the oldest cities in the Mayan world. Enjoy a sundowner as the sun sets behind the lagoon. Cross the border into Belize and check into the Hidden Valley Wilderness Lodge, located in Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve, Belize's oldest and largest national park, where three nights are spent. Dinner at the lodge.

27 February Mountain Pine Ridge

Drive through the Cayo region to the Butterfly farm and Green Hills Butterfly Ranch. Here, enjoy a guided tour of this beautiful butterfly sanctuary and learn about butterflies

of this area. Continue on through the Mennonite Community of Upper Barton Creek to the river at Barton Creek. Gently paddle along the river into the cave system known as Xibalba (she-bal-ba), Maya for underworld, as the ancient Maya used the cave as a ceremonial centre and burial site. Stalactites and Stalagmites hang high overhead as you float past impressive calcite crystal formations.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Return to the lodge. Remainder of the afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the lodge.

28 February Mountain Pine Ridge

Depart for the Maya village of San Antonio to see the Mestizo culture which is the mix of Maya and Spanish people. San Antonio contains people from two tribes, the Mopan and Yucatec Maya and is a famous village because it was the home of Dr Eljio Panti, one of the last Shaman in Belize. Continue up to the Mountain Pine Ridge Reserve. After the Mountain Pine Ridge, we start to see that the mountains change from Pine Forest to Tropical Rainforest and we enter the Chiquibul Forest Reserve.

Picnic lunch. Continue to the beautiful Maya site of Caracol, the largest archaeological site in Belize, covering 30 square miles of thick, high canopy jungle, and includes five plazas, an astronomic observatory and over 35,000 buildings that have



A beach on Ambergris Caye

been identified. The loftiest among them, a massive pyramid (Caana) capped by three temples and rises over 140 feet above the jungle floor. Return to the hotel stopping at the Rio-on Pools and Rio Frio Caves for an optional swim on the way. Dinner at the lodge.

1 March Mountain Pine Ridge / Ambergris Caye

Morning at leisure at the lodge.

Lunch under own arrangements. Check into Victoria House, a grand style colonial house with airy verandas and mature gardens planted with bougainvillea, hibiscus and oleander, where three nights are spent. Remainder of the afternoon at leisure. Dinner under own arrangements.

2 March Ambergris Caye

Today is spent on a private boat snorkelling exploring the breathtaking marine life flourishing in the Hol Chan Marine Reserve. Hol Chan, which means "Little Channel" in Mayan, features an opulent coral garden, including stag horn corals and sea fans, where myriad sea creatures live and feed. Watch as harmless nurse sharks and graceful southern stingrays ply the shallow, crystalline waters in the aptly named Shark Ray Alley passage.

Return to the hotel for lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner under own arrangements.

3 March Ambergris Caye

Morning snorkelling tour on a private boat at Mexico Rocks, just off North Ambergris Caye. See a collection of sponges, sea fans, and star, elkhorn, and staghorn coral formations in this superb reef patch. Look for angelfish, butterflyfish, flounder, green moray eels, nurse sharks, and stingrays, all of which take shelter in the coral's nooks and crannies

Lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon at leisure. Farewell dinner at the hotel.

4 March Ambergris Caye / Miami

Transfer to San Pedro Airport for a domestic flight to Belize International Airport. Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) with British Airways via Miami departs Belize at 14.48 hrs.

5 March Miami / London

Suggested flight arrives at London Heathrow at 10.55 hrs.



TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£7,875
Single Supplement	£2,340

Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Domestic flights as shown in the itinerary
- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 9 lunches; 8 dinners
- All entrance fees, visits and excursions as per the itinerary
- Group transfers and all transportation as detailed in the itinerary
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- Gratuities to driver/s; gratuities to guide/s; gratuities in restaurants; portage
- The services of your tour leaders throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Visa fees
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 17/04/25





YOUR TOUR LEADERS

Tom Owen Edmunds is a Senior Adviser on rainforest and conservation with the World Resources Institute (WRI), a Washington-based think tank specialising in climate and environment issues.

Tom started his working life as a photographer specialising in wildlife and travel, including numerous assignments in Latin America. In 1994 he was described by the British Journal of Photography as 'one of the world's leading travel photographers'. He has

shot assignments in over 100 countries, published books on Bhutan and Mexico, and photographed the books that accompanied the BBC Great Journeys series, taking him round the world 14 times, over 24 episodes.

From 1997-2019 Tom moved between aid and diplomatic posts with the UK Foreign Office, his last post as Head of the UK Climate Change Unit in the British Embassy in Jakarta. Previously, he held posts in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and London, and was Private Secretary to the Minister for Film, Broadcasting and Tourism.

Tom sat on the Council of the Royal Geographical Society from 2003-6, and was elected one of the youngest ever Fellows of the Royal Photographic Society aged 24. He read Geography at Oxford University specialising in ecology and sustainable development. Tom has a life-long passion for wildlife and wild places.

Libby Owen Edmunds is a sustainable tourism expert advising governments and multilaterals including The World Bank, USAID, and UK's FCDO. Over the last twenty years she has worked in more than 15 countries, particularly focussing on issues around climate and poverty.