



LA RUTA DE MAYA

8 days of volcanoes, lakes and challenging singletrack in Guatemala

Introduction

Guatemala is one of the most beautiful and culturally vibrant countries of Central America. Towering, active volcanoes compete with one of the world's most stunning lakes and colourful Mayan culture for the country's top attraction. With over 60% of the country counting themselves as indigenous Maya, this fascinating and ancient culture provides an inspiring backdrop for an unforgettable mountain bike adventure.

On this tour, you'll experience vibrant Mayan culture firsthand and ride world-class singletrack while doing it. The country is crisscrossed with ancient footpaths, most of which are perfect for challenging mountain biking. By getting off the roads and onto the trails of Guatemala, you'll have an opportunity to experience a Guatemala few other visitors do. By incorporating visits to Mayan villages and 2 Mayan schools, you'll have the opportunity to learn more about this fascinating culture, and give back to local communities.



We have developed this exciting trip with the help of local partners. You'll ride amazing trails, visit Mayan villages and experience Mayan culture at its best.

Highlights

- Incredible mountain biking trails on the ancient network of trails built by the Maya
- Awe-inspiring scenery with towering volcanoes and mountains
- Kayaking on Lake Atitlan, one of the most stunning lakes in the world
- Experiencing vibrant Mayan culture by visiting remote villages where indigenous languages are spoken.
- 2 visits to local schools, where a portion of your dollars helps support school projects and purchase supplies for the children.
- Small groups and professional quality guides that will give you personalized attention and help you improve your mountain bike skills.
- Main locations: Antigua, Lake Atitlan, Parramos, San Andres de Itzapa

RESPONSIBLE RIDING

- We use 2 local guides on this trip
- We use locally owned vans and drivers.
- We use locally owned hotels and restaurants.
- 2% of the cost of your tour goes toward supporting programs and purchasing school supplies for 2 Mayan schools.

Ride Guide: 90% off-road, featuring all-singletrack downhills and climbs on singletrack, doubletrack and roads. **Challenging, technical XC singletrack with rocky terrain, some exposure, and many terrain features. Suited to advanced bikers with a strong level of fitness.** Average 30 km/day.

Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive Guatemala City

Your shuttle will meet you at Guatemala Airport (please notify us of your flight arrival time and flight # in advance). From there we will take you to our hotel in Antigua (about 45 minutes - 1 hour). If you have time, feel free to explore the beautiful colonial city of Antigua's cobblestone streets and impressive colonial architecture.



Day 2: Antigua mountain biking, visits to local farms

We'll meet you at your hotel in the morning for breakfast and a pre-trip safety meeting. After our meeting, we'll hop on the bikes and head up to the base of Volcan Agua for our first taste of the local singletrack. Our first ride takes us on technical trails through Mayan farmland, with spectacular views of the valley below. After the ride, we'll head to a local Macadamia nut farm for lunch. After a hearty lunch we'll head to a local coffee farm to see how coffee is grown and sample a cup or two of the delicious local brew. Tonight we'll have dinner in one of Antigua's many restaurants.

Day 3: Antigua to Parramos, Maya Pedal & San Andres de Itzapa

After breakfast at our hotel, we'll head out on bikes to a nearby village, where we'll start the climb to Parramos. The ride takes us alongside volcanoes and through avocado plantations with an exciting singletrack ride to the Posada de mi Abuelo, where we will stop for lunch. After lunch, we'll ride to the nearby community of San Andres de Itzapa, where we'll visit a local school project for Mayan families. As part of our mandate, a portion of your trip cost will go towards purchasing school supplies for the school in San Andres de Itzapa. We'll also visit an innovative bike project called Maya Pedal, that provides refurbished bikes to Mayan communities in need.

Day 4: Lago de Atitlan, Santa Catarina ride

Today's ride could very well be one of the most stunning rides in the world. We set out from our hotel for a 1-hour climb to a spectacular viewpoint over Lago de Atitlan (Lake Atitlan). This sapphire-blue lake ringed by volcanoes is among the world's prettiest lakes - our ride takes on a beautiful singletrack ride above the lake before descending through cornfields and

narrow alleys in Santa Catarina de Palopo. The van will be waiting for us to take us to our boat ride to the otherworldly Casa del Mundo ("Guatemala's most magical hotel" - Lonely Planet), a boat-accessed hotel built into the side of a cliff. After dinner, we'll soak our muscles in a wood-fired hot tub under the stars.

Day 5: Kayaking and Hiking on Lago de Atitlan

This magical lake is worthy of another day, so we'll set out from the Casa del Mundo after breakfast in kayaks, for a relaxing 2-hour paddle (along with swimming and cliff jumping) to the village of San Marcos. In San Marcos we'll stop for coffee, then begin the 2-hour hike back to the hotel. Our hike takes us through several traditional Mayan villages, alongside the shore of the lake. We'll be back in time for lunch and a relaxing afternoon at the hotel.



Day 6: Slickrock ride, Panajachel and transfer to Earth Lodge

We'll hop in the boat back to Panajachel after breakfast, and then head by van to visit another Mayan school project supported by our Responsible Riding mandate. After our visit, we'll drive up to the top of a local mountain to start the demanding slickrock trail - a challenging singletrack ride with many exposed rock sections, similar to Utah's original Slickrock trail. When we finish, we'll hop in the van for the 2-hour drive back to Antigua. This time, we'll be staying at the Earth Lodge, an avocado farm 1000m above Antigua, with majestic views of the valley below.

Day 7: Cielo Grande (Big Sky) trail

This is one of the top rides in Central America - an all-day epic around Antigua traversing multiple bio-zones: jungle, volcano, farmland. The ride starts with a steep 1-hour climb from the Earth Lodge to the summit. From the summit the ride traverses the sides of the Antigua Valley before dropping spectacularly down into Antigua. We'll celebrate an incredible week at one of Antigua's local restaurants and a few drinks at a famous local tequila bar!

Day 8: Farewell and transfer to Guatemala airport

Shuttles depart every hour for Guatemala City and the airport for your flight back home.

Important: This day-to-day schedule should be taken only as a general guide. Although we update our itineraries every year, to take into account such things as: changes to biking routes and changes in the routing or availability of local transport, it is not possible to guarantee that any of our holidays will run exactly according to the proposed itinerary. A variety of factors, including adverse weather conditions and difficulties with transportation, can lead to enforced changes. The trip leader will make any changes that are necessary.

Trip Details

Trip Difficulty

The mountain biking in Guatemala is challenging, and this is our most advanced trip. The trails are rocky and rough, featuring many technical sections where solid bike handling skills are mandatory. Switchbacks are frequent, and some of the trails have exposure (i.e. there are dropoffs on one side of the trail). Many of the exposed sections are short and can be walked easily, however if you are not comfortable with technical, rocky trails, then this trip is not for you. **If you are looking for a challenging, unique mountain bike experience, then this trip is for you!**

Joining arrangements and transfers

We will pick you up at Guatemala City airport and take you to our hotel in Antigua. Please advise us of your flight arrival and flight # and we will meet

you at the airport. We can arrange extra nights at our hotel in Antigua for \$45 Cdn/person/day.

Services included

- Two experienced local mountain biking guides.
- Airport pickup and all land transport including one or more support vehicles
- 7 nights accommodation in local hotels
- Breakfasts and lunches and 2 dinners.
- 6 days of guided mountain biking
- 1 day of guided kayaking and hiking on Lake Atitlan
- Admission to cultural sites.

Services not included

- Travel Insurance
- Tips for local staff
- Miscellaneous personal expenses - drinks, souvenirs etc..
- Dinners - budget \$5-\$10 Cdn per dinner.
- International flight to and from Guatemala City is not included.

Spending money

Approximately \$60 Cdn to cover the meals not included. If you intend to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (credit cards can be useful in this respect). By far the easiest way to obtain your travel cash is from ATM's using a credit card or a debit card linked to the international Plus or Cirrus system - remember you will need your PIN number to do this. If you prefer bringing your travel money with you, we recommend that you use travellers' cheques, which are easily exchanged in banks and bureaux de changes (usually commission free) and often attract better exchange rates than cash. US dollars and euros are readily exchanged. Credit cards can be used to purchase goods and services in most shops, hotels and restaurants in touristed areas of Guatemala.

Additional days in Guatemala

Guatemala is such a beautiful country it seems a shame to only spend a week. If you want to extend your trip, we offer several exciting excursions:

1) a half-day hiking excursion to Volcan Pacaya, an active volcano overlooking Antigua. You'll walk on the lava bed, and even have the opportunity to get within a few metres of moving lava flows. A sight not to be missed! Price: \$139/p.p., includes hotel, breakfast + lunch, guide, and transportation.

2) No trip to Guatemala is complete without a visit to Tikal, the most spectacular of all Mayan ruins. Set deep in the Yucatan jungle, Tikal is a fascinating place to explore, with soaring pyramids and captivating ruins. Our two-day excursion gives you plenty of time to explore both the ruins and the jungle surrounding them. Price: \$450, including return flight to Flores, 2 nights at a nearby lodge, meals, transportation and guide.

If you wish to stay in Antigua for a few days after the trip, extra nights in the hotel can be purchased online (or added to your booking at any time) for \$45/person/night (based on double occupancy).

Getting Home

Notify us of your return flight back home and we will make the necessary arrangements to have you taken to the Guatemala City airport at the appropriate time.

Group leaders

The group will be accompanied by 2 experienced local mountain biking guides.

Equipment Checklist

- comfortable clothes for riding, such as biking jerseys and padded shorts. 3+ sets are ideal, 2 are a must.
- lightweight, weather-resistant outerwear for riding in inclement weather.
- warm clothing such as sweaters and fleece jackets and pants for nighttime.
- sturdy footwear for visiting sites on foot
- swimwear and towels
- sunglasses or some sort of eye protection for sunny and/or muddy days.
- helmet (mandatory) and some sort of hydration system
- toiletries i.e. toothbrush, shampoo, soap
- flashlight
- sunscreen and insect repellent
- English-Spanish phrasebook or dictionary (we recommend Lonely Planet Latin American phrasebook)
- valid passport with at least 6 months until expiry, from date of entry into Guatemala.

Bike parts

We recommend you bring a few extra parts for your bike that may be hard to find:

- extra tubes for your bike (these can be purchased as needed for \$6/tube).
- Derailleur hanger (the detachable part that your derailleur bolts on to)
- 2 sets of brake pads for your disc brakes (unless they were replaced very recently)
- a few spokes (these vary in size so we may not have your size)
- anything else that may be specific to your bike and model

Bike Rental

We offer front-suspension Gary Fisher mountain bikes and Kona OneTwenty Deluxe full-suspensions bikes for rent. The price is \$249 for Gary Fisher front-suspension and \$399 for the Kona full-suspension (for the duration of the trip).

Your Bike

Your Bike MUST be at least a mid-level mountain bike - call us if unsure. **Front suspension is mandatory, and we recommend full suspension.** We cannot stress enough the importance of ensuring that your bike is in perfect working condition before you start this trip. You are depending on your bike to transport you throughout your holiday, across demanding terrain. It is VITAL to ensure it is THOROUGHLY SERVICED to guarantee it is in good mechanical order before departure. If you are not mechanically minded, get your local bicycle dealer to service it for you. For home mechanics, points to note particularly are:

- a) check rims and if they are worn (concave) or cracked/dented replace with new rims to avoid wheel failure.
- b) check wheels are true and spoke tension is tight.
- c) check and grease ALL bearings and (QR's) Quick release skewers.
- d) check / replace brake and gear cables.
- e) check disc / brake pads, mounts and cables.
- f) check (lube / threadlock and tighten) bolts (**especially suspension pivots and bottom brackets**).
- g) check chain, cassette and chain rings for wear.
- h) Have you got the right tires, inner tubes and BIKE SPECIFIC SPARES?
- i) bring at least one extra derailleur hanger with you.

On a trip like this there will definitely need to be repairs and adjustments en-route. There will be the opportunity to buy limited spares initially.

Travelling with your bike

There are several ways you can travel with your bike: 1) in a hard shell bike case 2) get a cardboard shipping box from your local bike store or 3) in a soft shell bike bag. Of these 3 options we recommend using a soft-shell bike bag for several reasons: hard-shell bike cases are expensive, bulky and heavy, and can often result in significant extra charges by your airline; cardboard boxes don't protect your bike enough. If you are interested in purchasing a bike bag, we offer beautiful handmade bike bags made by Pika Packworks in the United States. **For more information visit <http://www.sacredrides.com/store.html>**

If you still want to use a cardboard box: all cycle shops have more of these cardboard boxes than they can easily get rid of and they are usually more than happy to give them away to local customers. For a small fee, the shop will often pack your bike in one of these boxes for you.

To fit your bike into a bike bag or cardboard box you will first need to remove your pedals, and take out your seat post. Then take off your handlebars, which you should tape (masking tape) under the down tube, you may need to release your front brake cable for this, be wary of crimping hydraulic cables if you have disc brakes. Finally deflate your tires and air shocks, take off your front wheel leaving the back wheel in place, and your bike should fit in the box. You will probably have to take the skewer out of the front wheel, and you should keep this in a padded bag with your pedals. If you use disks place a piece of cardboard between the pads to stop the pistons from popping out. As an added precaution you should also fit a plastic fork end protector. These come with new bikes, and most cycle shops will have a few lying around - which they will let you have. Also purchase some pipe lagging (expanded foam tubing) from a hardware store and tape it around the frame's tubes, shifters and back derailleur. You can also pack some of your clothing around the bike in plastic bags. Please be aware that taking your bike on a trip can entail its frequent loading onto support vehicles and while we will make all efforts to look after it, there is a good possibility of your bike being scratched. If you want to protect the paint work, you should consider keeping sections of the plastic pipe lagging taped onto your bike tubes throughout the trip especially for thin walled aluminium bikes like Cannondales / Ellsworth Truths etc.

If you are bringing a cardboard box: At the start of the biking, we flatten all our bike boxes for easy storage. We will be using the same boxes for the return flights and you will need to take with you an extra roll of packing tape to put your box back together and seal it for the return journey.

Accommodation

During this trip we will spend 7 nights in local hotels. We are staying at the following hotels (dial the international calling code [011 in North America], then 502 for Guatemala, then the number):

San Sebastian Hotel
Antigua +502-7832-2621

Posada de mi Abuelo
Parramos

Casa Del Mundo
Lago de Atitlan +502-5218-5332

Earth Lodge
Antigua +502-5664-0713 or +502-5613-6934

Food

With the exception of dinner, all meals are included in the trip cost. Food in Guatemala is of a good standard and plentiful! Our breakfasts generally consist of tea and coffee, breads and buns, fruit salad, eggs, and toast and jam. Lunches are generally taken on the trail or in the van and consist of sandwiches and snacks and fruit. Dinners are of an excellent standard in Antigua and Lake Atitlan and there is a wide variety of Western-style food

Please note that we take care to select restaurants that are clean and follow high standards of hygiene. However, contracting a food-borne illness is always a possibility when travelling in a developing country. We will help you mitigate these possibilities by ensuring that food is properly washed and that hygiene standards are adhered to. You must take care to ensure that you drink bottled water and take care not to drink local drinks which may contain contaminated water.

General Information

Safety

At Sacred Rides, your safety is the most important aspect of any trip we offer. We have been running mountain bike trips since 1996 and have guided over 1,000 clients without a serious injury. Our guides are extensively trained in first aid, and are skilled in challenging you while staying within safe limits. Guatemala has several additional concerns that are addressed below.

Health

Guatemala is a developing country in the tropics. As such, there are certain precautions that need to be taken before you arrive. There are vaccinations that need to be taken in advance; these are generally sufficient to ensure your safety while travelling in Guatemala. At present, typhoid and Hepatitis A are recommended; check with your local travel clinic to get up to date information. Please visit your local travel clinic or doctor for detailed up-to-date advice about which vaccinations you need and precautions you need to take.

Food-Borne Sickness

Travelers' diarrhoea is the most common travel-related ailment; most cases are mild and do not require antibiotics or anti-diarrheal medications. The cornerstone of prevention is food and water precautions; we will be taking all precautions to ensure that the food you eat and water you drink are safe. We will also have a full first-aid kit, with antibiotics (ask your doctor for a Cipro prescription) and diarrhea medications in case you should get sick. We will be in communication range at all times (via cell and satellite phones) should any medical emergencies occur.

For more information, visit

http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/destinations/mamerica_carib/guatemala.php

Climate

The weather in Guatemala features 2 seasons: wet and dry. Dry season runs from November through April. Rain is infrequent but is possible, so bring raingear. Temperatures are quite warm. Expect temperatures of 25-30 degrees Celsius (78-86 Fahrenheit) in the towns and valleys, and temperatures of 10-15 degrees Celsius (41-59 Fahrenheit) at the highest altitudes.

Visa requirements

A valid passport (with at least 6 months remaining validity) is required. At the present time, British and Canadian nationals and nationals of the United States do not require a visa. Other nationalities should contact the High Commission of Guatemalan their own countries for information on visas.

First Aid

A medical kit will accompany each trip. Our local leaders have appropriate wilderness first-aid training and are experienced in dealing with a range of

medical problems associated with adventure travel. We recommend that you bring your own personal first aid kit consisting of the following: A broad spectrum antibiotic, antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Immodium)

painkillers, bandages and blister treatment, Insect repellent and re-hydration salts.

RESPONSIBLE RIDING

In 2006, we formulated and instituted a mandate for sustainable tourism entitled **Responsible Riding**. Based on the belief that mountain biking can make a positive difference in the world, **Responsible Riding** incorporates the following key elements:

1) All of our staff is local. They come from the communities where we ride and their wages go back into local communities. In British Columbia, all of our guides live full-time in the Fernie area, and their wages go directly back into the community. In Guatemala, we are working with local guides who are paid the same wages that our Canadian guides earn. This contrasts with many other companies who pay guides subsistence wages (many porters on the Inca trail are paid less than \$3/day).

2) We use local suppliers and partners wherever possible. That means never using big box stores, purchasing local food and supplies, working with local sponsors and staying at locally owned campgrounds and hotels. Using local suppliers keeps dollars in the communities where we ride and helps them stay strong and vibrant.

3) A portion of tour costs goes to local development and sustainability projects in the areas where we ride. In British Columbia, 2% of tour costs go to the environmental organization WildSight, which works hard to preserve the natural environment of southeastern British Columbia. In Peru, 2% of the tour price goes directly to local development projects, such as the building of schools or the construction of wells in communities that do

not have access to clean water. We visit these communities as we ride and see how these projects are making a difference.

4) We contribute funds and time (e.g. trail-building) to the mountain biking communities in the areas where we ride. Every spring we visit communities such as Nelson and Golden and donate our time to local trail maintenance. We also donate money to their local mountain bike clubs.

5) We have our own non-profit organization, Bikes Without Borders, that distributes bicycles to families in developing countries. Bicycles form a vital form of transportation in communities where cars are rare and where distances to schools and other services are often large. **If you wish to donate bicycles or money to Bikes Without Borders, please call our office or visit www.bikeswithoutborders.org**

6) We have a stringent environmental code. We follow IMBA (International Mountain Biking Association) guidelines for reducing trail impact and these guidelines are passed on to our clients.

7) We have implemented a carbon offsets program. This is a relatively new concept aimed at offsetting the carbon emissions generated by business activity by investing in projects that reduce global carbon levels, such as treeplanting programs and renewable energy projects (e.g. wind farms). In 2007, Sacred Rides will be working with ZeroFootprint to calculate the total carbon emissions of its operations and will offset these emissions by investing in an equal amount of carbon offsetting programs. In addition, we will be instituting a voluntary program with our clients, encouraging them to offset the carbon impacts of their flights. We are working to design this program so that it is as easy to use and efficient as possible, thus encouraging its use.