

# EXPLORE!

Book with confidence

## Central American Explorer

COSTA RICA, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, NICARAGUA, PANAMA - TRIP  
CODE CAE

DISCOVERY

### Why book this trip?

A world of contrasts await on this epic adventure covering 5 countries in just 25 days, discovering the highlights of Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. Discover verdant rainforests, smouldering volcanoes, paradise islands and ancient ruins.

- **Caribbean** - Unwind on the beautiful islands of Bocas del Toro and Roatan, snorkelling in the warm waters of the Caribbean sea
- **Copan** - Discover the ancient Maya at this impeccable UNESCO World Heritage site
- **Wildlife** - Search for the beautiful quetzal in Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, Costa Rica



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
Breakfast: 17



**TRIP STAFF**  
Explore Tour Leader  
Boat Crew  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



**TRANSPORT**  
Bus  
Ferry  
Flight



**ACCOMMODATION**  
21 nights comfortable hotel  
3 nights premium hotel



**TRIP PACE:**  
Full on



**GROUP SIZE:**  
12 - 18

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join tour in Panama City (Panama)

Join trip in Panama City, Panama's eclectic capital and a curious mixture of old colonial Spanish architecture and modern American city buildings. Built on the back of the trade and plunder from the Spanish colonies in South America, Panama City was a key trade route as gold and silver were transported by mule through the rainforest of the Darien region, up to the Caribbean.

Due to the number of evening flights into Panama City, your Leader plans to do the welcome meeting on the morning of day two, and will leave a message in reception with details on timings and everything else that you'll need for the day. There are no activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Panama City at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Tocumen International Airport (airport code: PTY), approximately a 45 minute drive away from our hotel.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, we recommend a visiting 'Casco Viejo', the heart of the colonial town. Its ramparts were built to fend off marauders, and from the top you have excellent views of the 'Bridge of the Americas'.



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
Torres de Alba (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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### **DAY 2 - Panama Canal visit; afternoon free to explore the city**

This morning we will visit the Miraflores Locks to see the famous Panama Canal and appreciate the scale of this engineering miracle. Running 50 miles, the canal was carved out of the rainforest and through hillsides, lakes were dammed and locks built. After a serious French attempt costing in excess of 20,000 lives, the US successfully completed this remarkable endeavour after 10 years of toil in 1914. This afternoon has been left free for you to indulge in a little exploring of your own. 'Casco Viejo', full of Spanish plazas and colonial buildings, is a total contrast to the giant skyscrapers of the modern town and a great place to absorb the ambiance of the city.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Torres de Alba (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 3 - Public bus to David then head to Boquete**

This morning we take a public bus to Panama's beautiful southwest Chiriqui Province. This region is home to the Volcan Baru, a volcanic peak that at 3475m is the highest point in the country. The volcanic soil makes this a productive region, abundant in coffee and banana plantations, sugarcane crops and livestock. Heading for the provincial capital of David, we transfer into the cool fertile highlands to the town of Boquete. Located amidst a spectacular natural setting Boquete is a perfect base for walking into the surrounding hills, relaxing, or bird watching.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Oasis (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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#### **DAY 4 - Drive and boat to the Bocas del Toro Archipelago**

With a morning to enjoy time in Boquete before we depart in the afternoon for Almirante Port, from where we take a boat to the Isla Colon and the small town of Bocas de Toro, our base for exploring the stunning archipelago and the equally spectacular Parque Nacional Marino Isla Bastimentos. The archipelago itself is made up of a number of beautiful forested islands lying in the warm Caribbean waters just to the south of Costa Rica and the laid back beaches and dazzling reefs make this the ideal Caribbean paradise to relax or explore.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Laguna (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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#### **DAY 5 - In Bocas del Toro, optional boat trip around the islands**

We have a full free day today to enjoy fully this lovely island. There are a number of optional activities that you might like to try. The island is ringed with stunning beaches and there are opportunities to snorkel or dive the rich waters off shore. You may like to take a boat trip around the archipelago, which will go dolphin spotting or visit one of the outlying islands, such as Isla Bastimentos with its lovely beaches and tropical forests. The marine park itself can also be visited and is an important nesting ground for sea turtles, as well as being an important reserve for an abundance of marine and land based life.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Laguna (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



### DAY 6 - Journey to Sarapiquí (Costa Rica)

Returning to the mainland by boat we turn north and head on a full day's drive to the Costa Rican town of Puerto Viejo Sarapiquí. We cross the border at Guabito, into the Caribbean lowlands of Limon Province. Puerto Viejo lies at the confluence of the Puerto Viejo and the Sarapiquí rivers, an area of tropical rain forest that was once an important hub on the Caribbean trade routes. The area lies in the shadow of the Central Cordillera Mountains, sandwiched between the Braulio Carrillo N.P. to the west and the Tortuguero N.P. and Barra del Colorado National Refuge to the east.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Gavilan Rio Sarapiquí (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 7 - Travel to Arenal; optional evening bathe in hot springs

This morning we have a chance to explore a little more of Puerto Viejo and its environs. This area has been in the forefront of conservation for a number of years and La Selva biological station on the outskirts of town has done a great deal to involve the local community directly in the research and conservation of the area. You may like to take a walk along one of the many trails, or perhaps take a boat ride along the river, to see for yourself some of the beautiful forest that covers this fertile region. In the afternoon we drive, skirting the great central volcanic massif, past fertile farmlands, rich with a diversity of tropical crops, bringing us within sight of Arenal, Costa Rica's most active volcanic cone. This classic cone, which rises to 1,633m and is covered by a tangled mass of vegetation on one side whilst the other is starkly barren and scarred by lava flows. We recommend an evening bathe in the nearby thermal baths this evening (optional).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Arenal Country Inn (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 8 - Drive to Monteverde Cloudforest Reserve via Arenal Volcano**

This morning we visit the still active Arenal Volcano, set in an area of national park covering some 9,884 acres. The volcano has been fairly constantly active since the late 1960s and together with the impressive manmade Lake Arenal, the largest in Costa Rica, has helped the area to regenerate through tourism. After our visit we continue to the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve, one of the last remaining habitats in Central America of the famous Resplendent Quetzal, only occasionally sighted by eager travellers. The reserve covers an area of 10,522 hectares and contains within it a staggering diversity of flora and fauna; 2,000 species of plant, 400 species of birds and 100 different species of mammals.



ACCOMMODATION:  
El Bosque Hotel (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 9 - Guided reserve walk; optional canopy tour and night walk**

Rising early, we head into the reserve for a guided walk through the cloudforest, searching for a glimpse of the three-wattled bellbird or the Quetzal, whose feathers were traded as valuable items throughout pre-Columbian America. You have the afternoon free to explore this forest haven; you may wish to participate in the many amazing optional activities around the Reserve such as an exhilarating zip-wire experience as you whiz through the canopy, or perhaps exploring the forest on suspension bridges strung at canopy height. Alternatively the area's butterfly farm and orchid gardens are both well worth a visit. Tonight we also have the option to take a night walk, discovering how the forest comes alive after dusk.



ACCOMMODATION:  
El Bosque Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 10 - Transfer to Rincon de la Vieja and free afternoon for optional hiking

Our journey through Costa Rica's forests and jungles continues today as we head towards the Rincon de la Vieja National Park, an enormous adventure playground located close to the Nicaraguan border in the Guanacaste Province. The National Park has room for two volcanoes, of which one is still active, surrounded by a lush area of lagoons and craters, punctuated with steaming vents and pools of boiling mud. The changing elevation ranges of the park have resulted in an area of diverse habitats that house a variety of vegetation and wildlife. On arrival we will have the option to relax at our eco lodge, or alternatively we can choose to do some nature walks in the National Park, take a horseride to the Oropendola Waterfall, or walk to the park's mud and hot springs.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Buena Vista Lodge (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 11 - Visit the Rincon de la Vieja National park

This morning we visit the Rincon de la Vieja, with the aim of hiking along the Las Pailas Trail. This approximately 3 km hike is moderately difficult due to the uneven ground and the many large roots and rocks to tackle, but we'll take a leisurely pace and enjoy the diverse scenery of the trail. We'll be crossing bridges, walking through forest and across fields, all the while discovering the most impressive features of the park: the steam vents, or fumaroles. These incredible volcanic features pop out of the woods and forests as if from nowhere, along with bubbling ponds and mud pools from the underground volcanic heat and gases. During the first section of the trail we'll have the opportunity to spot wildlife in the forest, from a variety of bird species (toucans, blue-crowned motmots and flycatchers among many others), as well as spider monkeys, coatis or sloths if we're lucky.

This afternoon we have free time to enjoy some of the many optional activities on offer. There is plenty of hiking to be had nearby, as well as a walk to mud and hot springs, or if you're a fan of adventure, undertake the canyon swing at the Rio Blanco Canyon, or explore the surroundings on horseback or by bike.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Buena Vista Lodge (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 12 - Travel to Ometepe (Nicaragua); optional walks

Crossing the border into Nicaragua this morning a short drive brings us to San Jorge, the departure point for ferries to Ometepe Island. Ometepe is made up of two volcanoes connected by an isthmus; indeed its name comes from the Nahuatl language and means 'two hills'. The perfect cone of Concepción volcano soars from the depths of Lake Nicaragua to 1610m, only just dwarfing the neighbouring Maderas volcano at 1394m. We leave the time here free to explore at your own pace and there are many things to do during our time here. You can explore by local bus or truck, perhaps searching out pre-Colombian petroglyphs carved by the indigenous people, or taking in some of the highlights of the island and some short walks on the volcanic slopes (all optional). The forests echo with the sounds of howler monkeys and parrots and the canopy hides sloths and hawks amongst its lush foliage. Alternatively you could visit the San Ramon Falls. For the less energetic, some of the black sand beaches are the perfect spot to drink in



the stunning views across the lake.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Villa Paraiso (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 13 - Free day to discover Ometepe Island**

Today is left free to further explore these amazing volcanic islands.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Villa Paraiso (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 14 - Journey to the mainland and head to Granada**

We return by boat to San Jorge this morning and from there drive to Granada. Atmospheric Granada is a colonial gem, situated at the foot of Mombacho volcano on the northwest shore of Lake Nicaragua. It was the first colonial city in Nicaragua, founded in 1524 by the conquistador Hernandez de Cordoba and is set off by baroque and renaissance buildings which is a pure visual delight. We plan a city tour this afternoon, which will include visits to the Parque Central, the Monument to the war of independence, the plaza and the convent of San Fransisco, which holds the largest collection of stone sculptures from the early Americans who lived in Granada before the Spaniards.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Granada (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 15 - In Granada; free day to explore the colonial city**

Granada is the perfect city to explore on foot, wandering the narrow lanes and alleyways, discovering hidden delights amongst the central Plaza and historic buildings. It is possible to visit Las Isletas by boat or sea kayak - a group of tiny islands dominated by the Volcano Mombacho, located just offshore. You can glide through the forest canopy on a zip line - a remarkable experience, or venture farther afield, into the surrounding area, a prosperous agricultural centre growing hemp and tobacco. There are also possibilities to arrange visits to the Mombacho Cloud Forest. Your tour leader will be more than happy to help arrange any excursions you may like to try.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Granada (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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## DAY 16 - Drive to Leon via Masaya Market

We drive to the old colonial capital of Leon today, lying in the shadow of the Cordillera de los Maribios Mountains. Heading northwest from Granada we stop at the famous market town of Masaya to visit the Masaya volcano. From here we continue to the Nicaraguan capital of Managua. In comparison with colonial Leon and Granada, Managua is not the most attractive of Nicaragua's cities but it does have its own curious, if somewhat unorthodox, charm. Badly damaged in the 1972 earthquake, the city is gradually being rebuilt. We plan a short tour to see some points of interest. We then drive to Leon, today considered the intellectual centre of Nicaragua, Leon was founded in 1525 and was the capital for 200 years. In the afternoon we will have a walking tour of Leon, where our local guide will introduce us to some of the city's most important sites visiting Plaza del las Armas, the Cathedral arguably the largest in Central America and a UNESCO heritage site and the Sandinista Murals and Ruben Dario Park, named after one of Latin America's most renowned poets. The city of Leon was home to the revolution that shaped Nicaragua's future, and since then it has played a crucial part in the social and political history of the country. On our walking tour we will see many murals depicting the civil war and the revolution - a testament to the importance of this movement in the country's turbulent history.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Austria (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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## DAY 17 - Free morning for optional Cerro Negro Volcano hike; drive Tegucigalpa (Honduras)

This morning we have some free time, and the intrepid amongst us may head out of the city to summit Cerro Negro, an imposing active volcano just a short journey from the city of Leon. The ascent takes around an hour, and although the climb is only around 500m, the path is steep and tough. The absence of trees on the slopes of the mountain provides fantastic 360 views of the area one we are at the crater rim, and if we are lucky, we may see the smoke and gas often emitted from this central crater. For something less exertive, Las Penitas Beach is a great place to relax for the day, whilst a visit to San Juan Venado Mangrove Reserve provides the opportunity to spot a wealth of wildlife, including crocodiles, caiman and iguanas. This afternoon we depart from Leon, crossing the border into Honduras and continuing our journey to the capital, Tegucigalpa. Founded by the Spanish in 1578, the city was once a trading centre for the locally mined gold and silver for its colonial masters and its ideal location must have made it a pleasant respite from the oppressive heat of the coastal regions.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel G&V (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 18 - Fly to Roatan

This morning we will fly to the beautiful Bay Islands, home to some of the best diving and snorkelling in the Caribbean. The 3 islands lying some 50km off the Honduran coast are a marine wonderland, with reefs that teem with life. For the next two nights we base ourselves on the island of Roatan, the largest of the islands and the perfect location from which to enjoy the spectacular beaches and rich waters of this underwater haven.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Splash Inn (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 19 - On Roatan, choose to relax on beaches, kayak or snorkel

Here you are free to do as much or as little as you wish. The obvious activity for most people who come to these islands is to explore the offshore reefs, part of a chain that is only second in size to the Great Barrier Reef itself. There are a number of dive shops on the island for any qualified divers (don't forget to bring your certification with you) and the snorkelling is second to none, with reefs that are alive with corals and sponges and colourful reef fish of every size, shape and hue. It is also possible to hire boats and kayaks to explore farther afield, or go fishing. Those who prefer to stick to dry land might like to

stroll through the palm fringed lanes and wander the island in search of macaws, toucans and parrots, or perhaps just some peace and quiet at the nearby Sandy Bay's resort or visit the nearby botanical gardens.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Splash Inn (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 20 - Head back to the mainland and travel to Copan Ruinas

Leaving our island paradise early this morning, we head back to the mainland for a full days travel. Our destination today is the magnificent Mayan ruins of Copan. Travelling around the town of San Pedro Sula in the rich hot fertile lowlands of the Sula Valley, we arrive at Copan Ruinas, a lovely village of adobe buildings very close to the ruins themselves.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Plaza Copan (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 21 - Visit the UNESCO Site of Copan, free afternoon

This morning we visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site with a local guide. Everyone familiar with Catherwood's incredible drawings (which first appeared in John Stephens' 1841 narrative - 'Incidents of Travel in Central America and Yucatan') will recognise scenes and objects from this marvellous site. Stephens actually bought the entire site for US\$ 50 from a local farmer! The Great Plaza is one of the most amazing achievements of the Classic Maya period (AD 750) and contains the greatest collection of Maya sculpture anywhere in Meso- America. The famous Hieroglyphic Stairway is composed of 2500 individual glyphs; its sides flanked by serpentine birds and snakes. We have the whole day to enjoy this special place, leaving you plenty of time to explore on your own. In the afternoon you may like to visit the museum dedicated to the site, or visit some nearby hot springs or to Macaw Mountain (optional).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Plaza Copan (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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## DAY 22 - Drive to Antigua (Guatemala); walking tour of the town

We head into Guatemala this morning, to the stunning city of Antigua, set in a beautiful valley between the volcanoes Agua, Fuego and Acatenango. An orientation tour of this graceful old colonial city, with its cobbled streets and lovely old buildings identifies it as one of the most charming in the country and shows how it can justly claim to be one of the most picturesque in Central America, despite the damage caused by a series of earthquakes and floods over the ages. This afternoon we intend to take a walking tour of the town. Much of Antigua has been repeatedly devastated by earthquakes, but still it retains a graceful charm and its buildings and ruins give it the air of a snapshot in time.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Villa Colonial (or similar)

**Grade: Premium Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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### **DAY 23 - Free day to explore Antigua or optional trip to Chichicastenango Market**

The next two days are free to explore more of the city and its environs as you wish. Antigua itself deserves at least a day's wandering, you may like to visit churches, colonial buildings, museums as well as spending time shopping in its many markets. Alternatively may like to visit the close by Mayan site; Iximche, once the capital of the Cakchiquel Maya, founded in the 15th century. Set within pine forests the ruined city was once believed to be home to some 10,000 people at its height, until the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors resulted in its eventual destruction in 1526.

There is also the option, on one of your two days in Antigua, to visit the Maya site of Tikal. This full day trip entails a domestic flight from Guatemala City to Flores, before the drive to the majestic jungle-clad ruins, which were, in their prime, the pride of the Maya empire.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Villa Colonial (or similar)



**Grade: Premium Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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## DAY 24 - Free day to spend in Antigua or choose to visit Lake Atitlan

For those not wishing to spend the day exploring the city, a day trip to Lake Atitlan takes in one of Guatemala's most stunning locations. Panajachel, on the shores of the spectacular lake, is an old Spanish settlement that has attracted foreigners to its charming location for years. The lake itself is an old caldera, its deep waters surrounded by the towering volcanic peaks of its neighbours. This is an ideal place to shop for those last minute presents, or just enjoy the ambience of its lakeside setting. Alternatively, you could visit Guatemala City, the bustling country capital, is situated on a high plateau (1495m) and possesses all the usual contradictions found in large Latin American cities: elegant tree-lined boulevards and high-rise architecture alongside crowded shanties. It also has a number of sites and museums that are worth visiting, including the Ixchel Museum, with its displays of Guatemalan textiles and arts, or the majestic Palacio National in the Plaza Major.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Villa Colonial (or similar)

Grade: Premium Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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## DAY 25 - Tour ends Antigua

The trip ends this morning at our hotel in Antigua Guatemala.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day, luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to depart from La Aurora International Airport (airport code: GUA). The drive between the airport and our hotel is only 40km but can take between 1.5 and 4 hours depending on the traffic and the time of day.



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE



# Trip information

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## Climate and country information

### Costa Rica

#### Climate

Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page. Costa Rica has a tropical climate with high temperature humidity and rainfall. The average temperature is 21°C in the highlands and variable in the lowlands. The rainy season is from May to November and the summer from December to April, but it does still tend to rain, usually in short bursts. Bear in mind that Costa Rica has 12 microclimates and weather can vary significantly in one day.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-6	2 Pin Flat	Christian, Roman Catholic	Spanish

### Guatemala

#### Climate

In the high plains (1524m-1981m) the climate is temperate all year round. In lower areas the climate is semi-tropical. The mountains can be cool especially at night. In general, the dry season in Guatemala lasts from Nov - April. From May to October there are often fine mornings and clear evenings but afternoon rains tend to be heavy. The Peten lowlands tend to be rainy all year round though less so from February to April.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-6	2 Pin Flat	Catholic and Protestant	Spanish

### Honduras

#### Climate

Climate change varies depending upon altitude. Mid range temperatures reach about 28°C. Rainfall is low to moderate with May to October being the wettest season. Temperature ranges in the lower reaches of the slopes and along the coast are more constant, with less rainfall.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-6	2 Pin Flat	Roman Catholic and Protestant	Spanish

### Nicaragua

## Climate

Tropical, with little seasonal variation in temperature. The heavy rainy season is May to October but it can rain at any time along the Caribbean coast of Rio San Juan. There are 3 main climactic zones, the hot tropical lowlands and the cooler hill region, which has a larger range of daily temperature.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-6	2 Pin Flat	Roman Catholic	Spanish

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## Panama

### Climate

Panama has a tropical climate with high temperature and humidity, the average temperature 30°C. The rainy season is from May to November and the summer from December to April. The rainfall is of a tropical nature, falling for 1-2 hours in the afternoon.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-5	2 Pin Flat	Roman Catholic	Spanish

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## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Panama City tour US\$10

Boquete - Walking tour in the rainforest US\$25; Bird watching US\$35; Coffee tour US\$20

Bocas del Toro - Full day snorkel excursion US\$25

Sarapiquí - River boat trip US\$23

Arenal - Hotspring US\$65 (with dinner); US\$15 Las Termalitas.

Monteverde - Butterfly Gardens US\$15, Reptile and Amphibian Centre US\$15, Nightwalk US\$25, Hanging bridges US\$35, Zipwire Canopy US\$45.

Rincon De La Vieja - Horse riding US\$ 45

Ometepe - Guided tour US\$ 25, Volcano Maderas / or Concepcion walk US\$ 35 (min. 2 persons).

Leon - Las Penitas and Juan Venado Reserve US\$ 45; Iguana farm US\$ 25; Cerro Negro Hike US\$ 30

Granada - Boat to Las Isletas US\$ 25 based on 4 sharing, Mombacho Cloud Forest Canopy Tour US\$ 55.00 based on 4 sharing, Kayak US\$ 25

Roatan - Diving US\$ 30 one tank, Snorkel - US\$15, Glass bottom - US\$25

Copan - Visit to Hot Springs US\$ 35, Macaw Mountain US\$ 10 +US\$5 tpt

Antigua - All prices depending on numbers - minimum 3

Lake Atitlan inc. boat trip US\$80-23; Guatemala City US\$ 90-30; Pacaya volcano US\$65 (based on 5) and US\$39 (based on 15) ; Chichicastenango US\$ 38-40 (min 5 people) ; Jade workshop US\$48; Day trip to Tikal US\$350 (inc guide and lunch) - subject to availability - please book with your Tour Leader on arrival; La Casa del Ron - Rum tasting US\$13

## Clothing

Lightweight clothing is essential though a warmer sweater is advisable for cooler evenings in the highlands. A waterproof is essential. The jungle lowlands are hot and muggy, and it can rain at any time of year. Long trousers and long-sleeved shirts are recommended on jungle walks.

## Footwear

Comfortable walking boots or shoes and trainers or sandals.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daysack is essential for this trip.

## Equipment

A torch, water bottle, insect repellent, high factor sunscreen, beach towel, camera film, waterproof bag for camera and motion sickness tablets/patches for the boat. If intending to snorkel you may wish to bring your own equipment and anyone intending to dive on Roatan will need to bring log books and certification. Binoculars are very useful for bird and animal spotting. An umbrella can be useful in short downpours.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

Your Leader - Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. However, you might want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline

### Local crew

Local Crew: Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, your leader may organise a group's tips kitty for included activities and meals and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly, you should allow US\$65 for group tipping.

For all non-included services and meals on your trip please tip independently at your discretion.

### International Departure Taxes

Please allow US\$40 for border taxes.

## Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

<b>Lunch price</b>	<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£13	£13	£3	£1.3

## Foreign Exchange

### Local currency

Costa Rican Colon (CRC)

### Recommended Currency For Exchange

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the CRC is approximately CRC 800 to the British Pound. USD are accepted in some shops / restaurants. We recommend you take some emergency cash in USD as the GBP exchange isn't very good. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they may not be accepted. Please check on line for up to date information

### Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

### ATM Availability

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in Colones. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

### Credit Card Acceptance

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

### Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

## Guatemala

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£8.00 - 10.00	£2.00 - 4.00	£1.00 - 2.00

### Foreign Exchange

### **Local currency**

Quetzal (GTQ)

### **Recommended Currency For Exchange**

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the GTQ is approximately GTQ 9.7 to the British Pound. Please check on line for up to date information

### **Where To Exchange**

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

### **ATM Availability**

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in Guatemalan Quetzal. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

### **Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

### **Travellers Cheques**

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

## **Honduras**

### **Food and drink**

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

<b>Lunch price</b>	<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£7	£10	£1.75	£2

### **Foreign Exchange**

#### **Local currency**

Lempira (HNL)

#### **Recommended Currency For Exchange**

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport/ border. At the airport you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change and at the border there are exchange opportunities. We recommend you take your cash in USD as the GBP are hard to exchange. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they may not be accepted. The exchange rate with the HNL is approximately HNL 30 to the British Pound. Please check on line for up to date information

#### **Where To Exchange**

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

### **ATM Availability**

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in Lempira. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

### **Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

### **Travellers Cheques**

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

## **Nicaragua**

### **Food and drink**

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£10.00 - 12.00	£2	£0.8

### **Foreign Exchange**

#### **Local currency**

Cordoba (NIO)

#### **Recommended Currency For Exchange**

You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the NIO is approximately NIO 42 to the British Pound. We recommend you take some emergency cash in USD as the GBP exchange isn't very good. Notes should be in good condition otherwise they may not be accepted. USD can be used in some places in Nicaragua. Please check on line for up to date information

#### **Where To Exchange**

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

#### **ATM Availability**

ATMs can be found in the major towns and cities for cash withdrawals in NIO. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

#### **Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit card are widely accepted in many shops and restaurants but some may be subject to a service charge

#### **Travellers Cheques**

We do not recommend Travellers Cheques

## Panama

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

<b>Lunch price</b>	<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£7	£10	£3	£0.7

### Foreign Exchange

#### Local currency

Balboa (PAB)

#### Recommended Currency For Exchange

Local currency in Panama is the Balboa (PAB). You can choose to either change your money in advance or on arrival at the airport. Here you will find both ATMs and Bureau de Change. The exchange rate with the PAB is approximately PAB 1.20 to the British Pound. US dollars are legal tender in Panama. Notes should be in good condition, otherwise they might be difficult to use. Please check on line for up to date information.

#### Where To Exchange

Your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

#### ATM Availability

ATMs are not widely available outside of Panama city. Always have some cash back up as they are not always reliable

#### Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are not widely accepted outside Panama City.

#### Travellers Cheques

Please note credit card are not widely accepted

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## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Ferry, Flight

### Accommodation notes

During this trip we stay in a range of comfortable, 3 star standard hotels and lodges. At the end of the trip we have three nights at the beautiful Villa Colonial in Antigua, a colonial style accommodation with a lush garden, swimming pool and fantastic views to the Volcan Fuego from the balcony of the restaurant.

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## Essential Information

### Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa and Passport Information

Panama: Citizens from the UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canada do not require a visa for a stay up to 30 days. However, on entry you will be required to show that you have either 500USD in cash or a credit card.

Costa Rica: Citizens from the UK, US, Canada and most EU countries do not require a visa for a stay up to 90 days. Citizen of Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland do not require a visa for stays up to 30 days.

Nicaragua: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens.

Honduras: Citizens from UK, New Zealand, Australia, New Zealand and most EU national do not require a visa.

Guatemala: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens.

USA: (including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) - where you apply for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), which applies if you enter the country by sea or by air. This must be done on line - <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip are likely be refused boarding.

You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover.



If you have visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan since 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA and instead you will need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel.

Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (Not necessary if in transit)

For further information please check out the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html>

Canada: An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp>

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## **Booking conditions**

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## **Transfers**

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

### **Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## **Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## **Ability to swim**

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

## **Costa Rica**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Guatemala

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Honduras

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Nicaragua

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended. All travellers coming to Nicaragua from the following countries (even if only in transit) must present an international certificate of vaccination: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Panamá, Paraguay and Venezuela. From the African Continent, all countries are included except Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Sao Tomé and Príncipe and Somalia. This list is regularly updated please check NaTHNaC for the most up to date list. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Panama

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, infectious hepatitis and polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please note many countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean require a yellow fever vaccination certificates if travelling from infected areas. A detailed list of these countries can be found on the NaTHNaC website - <http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>. Also on the NaTHNaC site there is a list of Countries (and specific areas within a country) which are at risk of infection and a vaccination is therefore recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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### Additional Information






## Why book this trip

For those with time to play with, this is an epic adventure through 5 of Central America's 7 countries, exploring forests, beaches and volcanoes, discovering Maya ruins and hearing revolutionary history. This 25-day trip is varied, diverse and action packed!

## Reviews



 <p><b>AWARD WINNING EXPLORE LEADERS</b></p>	 <p><b>PRICE GUARANTEE PROMISE</b></p>	 <p><b>AIRPORT TRANSFERS</b></p>
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