EXPLORE!

Contrasts of Mexico + Yucatan Peninsula Extension

BELIZE, GUATEMALA, MEXICO - TRIP CODE MXY

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

An unbeatable in-depth exploration of the mysterious land of the Aztec, Zapotec and Maya civilisations. Covering archeological highlights in Tikal and Chichen Itza, this trip also takes in little known sites, as well as exploring the varied cultures of Mexico's heartland, and includes a relaxing stay on Belize's Barrier Reef. Some departures have been set to coincide with Mexico's Day of the Dead Festival.

- **The Yucatan Peninsula** - Limestone swimming holes, ancient Maya ruins and tropical beaches abound on Mexico's Caribbean coast
- **Palenque** - Arguably the most enchanting of the ancient Maya ruins, set in dense jungle
- **Oaxaca** - Wander the streets and markets of this delightful UNESCO World Heritage City

INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 1
Dinner: 1

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

TRANSPORT
Bus
Boat

ACCOMMODATION
19 nights comfortable hotel
1 nights simple lodge

TRIP PACE:
Full on

GROUP SIZE:
10 - 16

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join tour in Mexico City

Check-in at hotel in Mexico City. Modern day Mexico City was built on top of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan by the Spaniards, after their conquest of the city. Today this busy, lively, city boasts a wealth of historical buildings, museums and markets.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Fontan (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Mexico City tour including the Museum of Anthropology

On our first day in Mexico City we visit the Zocalo (main square) area. The Cathedral and National Palace with many of Diego Rivera's remarkable murals on the history of Mexico are all built on top of Tenochtitian the old Aztec capital. Afterwards we will visit the museum of Anthropology, one of the

finest museums in the world, its exhibits offer a taste of the history ahead of us.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Fontan (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 3 - Visit the Teotihuacan Pyramids and the Basilica de Guadalupe

The next day we will drive out to the mysterious pyramids of Teotihuacan. Although abandoned thirteen centuries ago, they are still an unbelievable sight. Once the largest city in the Americas with perhaps 100,000 inhabitants, its influence continued through Middle America, and Maya craftsmen borrowed its decorative motifs and building designs. Centuries later the Aztecs revered Teotihuacan as 'the Place of the Gods'. Returning downtown we visit the Basilica de Guadalupe.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Fontan (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 4 - Journey to Oaxaca; Day of the Dead celebrations

Leaving the capital we drive south through cactus country to Oaxaca, one of the most charming colonial cities in Mexico. Arriving in the afternoon, we will have some free time to explore the city on foot. The colonnaded Zocalo comes alive at night as families come to stroll in the shade, while street vendors and entertainers vie for their attention. Oaxaca also has several colourful markets. On this tour, we will spend

time in Oaxaca during the Day of the Dead celebrations. This is one of the best places to witness the Day of the Dead as the streets become alive with parades, and markets selling flowers and local delicacies fill the air with colour and perfume. Due to the nature of the celebrations many of the festivities take place at night in the local cemeteries. During our time here we will experience as much of the carnival-like atmosphere that brings the streets of Oaxaca to life as we can.

ACCOMMODATION:
Oaxaca real (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 5 - Visit the ancient complex of pyramids of Monte Alban

Colonial Oaxaca was built with stones taken from ancient temples a few miles away. We explore the complex of temples, pyramids and enigmatic rock carvings at Monte Alban, a high spur that looms over the fertile valley. This mystical site was created by Zapotec Indians, who flourished here a thousand years ago. This afternoon there may be the chance to see some of the exquisite treasures of Monte Alban in the Regional Museum (known as the Louvre of Oaxaca) in town (optional).

ACCOMMODATION:
Oaxaca real (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 6 - Journey to Tehuantepec via the Mitla ruins

Today we journey through the mountainous Sierra Madre range, stopping to visit the 2000-year old swamp cypress tree in Santa Maria del Tule just outside Oaxaca and continuing to the Mixtec/Zapotec site of Mitla where we will have a short exploration of the ruins. Our destination this evening is the hot and windy isthmus of Tehuantepec, a convenient stopping point on our journey towards San Cristobal.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Calli (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 7 - Sumidero Canyon boat trip then head to San Cristobal

Leaving early this morning we have a roughly 5 hour drive to Chiapa de Corzo, the starting point for our visit to the spectacular Sumidero Canyon, a unique rift 41km long and up to 1000mts deep, cut by the Rio Grijalva. This is the spot where, in the 16th century, some 1000 Chiapa indigenous people committed suicide rather than submit to Spanish rule. We take a trip on a speed boat to fully appreciate the towering gorge, before driving up a scenic mountain road to San Cristóbal de las Casas. At 2210m above sea level, it can get cold at night, a sharp contrast to the heat of Tehuantepec.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Arrecife (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 8 - Discover the indigenous villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan

There is a unique atmosphere to this small colonial town, high in the scenic Chiapas range. The indigenous groups from the surrounding hills fill the town and marketplace with their colourful dress including the distinctive Tzotzil community who still retain much of their Mayan customs and language. We will be visiting San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan, indigenous villages close to San Cristobal that practice an interesting blend of Catholicism and traditional Maya beliefs. This area is noted for the bright textiles and weavings in bold designs, and when we return to San Cristobal we'll have the afternoon free to bargain for some colourful souvenirs. You may also wish to visit the Na Bolom, the House of the Jaguar, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Lacandón tribe and displays many of their artefacts or the Kakaw museum where you can learn about the history and production of chocolate in the area.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Arrecife (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 9 - Travel to Palenque via the Roberto Barrios waterfalls

Leaving the highlands, the road is slow and winding, but there are scenic views as we descend to the jungles of Palenque. We'll be driving via the town of Villahermosa, planning to bathe at the waterfalls of Roberto Barrios before driving onto our hotel. The river at Roberto Barrios tumbles over a series of limestone hills, forming a number of natural pools with overhangs, caves and numerous waterfalls to swim under.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Maya Tulipanes (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 10 - Discover the important Mayan site of Palenque

One of the highlights of our tour is today's guided visit to the famous jungle ruins of Palenque, a fascinating and important Mayan site. Once the choking forest was cleared, the ruins revealed the tomb of the high priest Pakal, his body adorned with a marvellous jade death mask - one of the most prized relics of the Maya culture, discovered only in 1952. The entire site, shrouded by the steamy rainforest, has an aura of deep mystery. During the afternoon you can continue to explore the site, or take a bus back to the waterfall of Misol Ha for a refreshing swim (optional). The stunning 30m high waterfall was featured in the titles of the movie 'Predator'.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Maya Tulipanes (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 11 - Drive to Frontera Corozal; travel by boat to Yaxchilan

Today we head into the Lacandon area to the ruins of Bonampak. The discovery of the well preserved murals at this site had a profound impact on our understanding of the Mayans. Continuing to Frontera, we board our lancha (river boat) on the Ucumacinta river and head for the remote site of Yaxchilan, famous for its stelae and roof combs. We continue back up the river through the rainforest to our overnight lodge near where we boarded our boat earlier today.

ACCOMMODATION:
Escudo Jaguar (or similar)

Grade: Simple Lodge

MEALS PROVIDED: DINNER

DAY 12 - Head to Flores, optional boat trip on Lake Peten Itza

Our Mayan rainforest experience continues up river by boat to the small settlement of Bethel on the Guatemalan side before progressing by road to Flores, on Lake Peten Itza. The afternoon can be spent enjoying a leisurely boat trip on the blue waters of the lake (optional).

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Casona de la Isla (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 13 - Explore the great Mayan metropolis of Tikal (Guatemala)

Today we visit Tikal, the great Maya metropolis set in the midst of the rainforest, which can justly be compared with the celebrated ancient cities of Egypt and Greece. Initially settled in about 600BC, Tikal was abandoned by its rulers around 890AD and totally deserted a hundred years later. The city covered an area of 16 square kilometres. Re-discovered in 1848, only a few of its great temples and pyramids have been excavated. The site is extensive, so we include a guided tour in the morning followed by free time to let you explore. We can appreciate the prolific birdlife in the surrounding rainforest and take in amazing views of the forest canopy from the tops of the pyramids. We drive back to Flores at around 3.30pm.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Casona de la Isla (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 14 - To San Ignacio (Belize)

Today we drive over the border to San Ignacio in Belize, visiting the little known site of Xunantunich en route, with it's fantastic array of pyramids and temples.

ACCOMMODATION:

Midas Resort (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 15 - Drive to Belize City and boat to Caye Caulker

We drive to Belize City for our first view of the Caribbean and board our water taxi for the one-hour journey to the enchanting tropical island of Caye Caulker. Once a pirate lair, this tiny but beautiful island lies 34km northeast of Belize City and about 1.6km inside the greatest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere.

ACCOMMODATION:
Anchorage Resort (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 16 - Relax on Caye Caulker; optional trip to observe manatees

The island remains uncrowded and unluxurious, and the local fishermen catch lobster, conch, fish and crab to supply domestic and foreign markets. It's a popular place with backpackers, so there is a proliferation of good, reasonably priced restaurants. There's time to relax or enjoy a number of optional trips. You may take a snorkelling trip out to the nearby Hol Chan Marine Reserve and Shark and Ray Alley, or take a full-day trip out to Goff's Caye to observe manatee in their natural mangrove habitat. Scuba diving is also available.

ACCOMMODATION:
Anchorage Resort (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 17 - Boat back to the mainland then drive to Bacalar

We leave Caye Caulker by boat this morning, sailing back to the mainland and crossing into Mexico via the port of Chetumal. We then continue by vehicle to the small town of Bacalar, situated on the banks of the beautiful Lake Bacalar in the Riviera Maya. The lake is frequently named 'the Seven Coloured Lagoon' for its many different shades of blue, and has strikingly clear waters due to the white limestone bottom. We have this afternoon free, with the possibility of taking a boat trip across the lake or visiting the Fort of San Felipe, with it's interesting museum on the local pirates who scourged the area in the 17th and 18th centuries.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Aires Bacalar (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 18 - Visit Tulum before driving to Valladolid

We head northeast from Bacalar this morning, towards the dramatically situated site of Tulum, situated on its clifftop perch overlooking the turquoise water and golden sands below. The ruins of Tulum date back to the late period of the Mayan civilisation when there was developing enmity between Mayan provinces, so the city is guarded by thick ramparts and a watch tower. After visiting the site we will continue on to the colonial city of Valladolid, via the cenote Zazil Ha (an underground pool naturally formed in limestone and used by the ancient Maya as a source of water) where we'll have the chance for a swim.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Meson De Marquez (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 19 - Explore Chichen Itza; travel to Merida

This morning we visit the ruins of Chichen Itza. Founded in AD432, re-founded in 987 and conquered by the Toltecs in the 10th century, the culture of the Maya and the Toltec gradually fused. The pyramids, palaces, temples and ballcourt (where death was the penalty for defeat) are adorned with astonishing sculptures. Under the pressure of the civil war, the great monuments deteriorated and the Maya civilisation collapsed. Chichen Itza remains one of the most outstanding sites in the Americas, and one of UNESCO's Seven New Wonders of the World. We then drive via the colonial backwater of Izamal to Merida, famed for its beautiful Spanish-Moorish style architecture.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Colonial (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 20 - Visit the ancient Mayan city of Uxmal

This morning we will visit the site at Uxmal. Encircled by hills, Uxmal is expansive in its design with majestic palaces and pyramids. Long geometrical friezes rank among the most splendid examples of ancient American Art. The incredible Pyramid of the Magician and the beautiful Governor's Palace are two of the finest examples of Mayan art anywhere. Later in the day we return to Merida, where we have time to wander along the narrow streets watching the horse-drawn carriages rattle past. Alternatively there is an option to visit Celestun, the pink flamingo sanctuary.

ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Colonial (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel

SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE

SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 21 - Tour ends Merida

The tour ends this morning in Merida.

MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

Trip information

Country information

Belize

Climate

Sub-tropical with a brisk prevailing wind from the Caribbean. Summer highs are rarely above 35°C, winter lows rarely below 15°C. Annual rainfall ranges from 107cm in the north to 364cm in the south and humidity can be high at any time of year. The rainy season extends from June through October with a short dry period in August, but some rain can be expected throughout the year.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
-6	2 Pin Flat	Christian	English

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

Mexico

Climate

Mexico is a vast country whose weather varies by season and region. The optimum time to travel is generally between December and April when rainfall is at a minimum. Temperatures are coolest between December and February and temperatures start to rise from March and the hottest months are May, June and July. The rainy season runs from May until October when humidity and temperatures are highest. The rains tend to be intense and short, clearing the humidity before building up again. The Caribbean coast can be affected by hurricane season between June and November. Please bear in mind that at altitude the temperatures can drop considerably at night and sudden changes can occur at any time.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion
-6	2 Pin Flat	Roman Catholic, Protestant

Language

Spanish is the official language, but around 50 languages/dialects are also spoken by the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

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.

Mexico City - Ballet Folklorico - US$80-120; Coyoacan Frida Kahlo Museum US$14 (plus transport)
Oaxaca - Regional Museum US$ 5
San Cristobal - Na Bolom US$5 ; Kakaw Museum US$2 ; Kakaw Chocolate workshop US$20; Folkloric dancing US$25
Palenque - Misol Ha waterfall US$15
Flores - Boat trip on Lake Peten Itza US$ 20; Tikal Canopy - US$50
San Ignacio - Iguana Farm US$12
Caye Caulker - half day snorkel US$35; Full day Snorkel US$65 inc. lunch; Manatee search US$85 inc. lunch
Merida - Celestun US$ 135pp (min 5 pers) ; Mundo Maya Museum US$20

Clothing

Warmer clothing is needed in the highlands (San Cristobal and Mexico City), which are mostly mild, but temperatures can drop dramatically at night. Pack a fleece and some long sleeved clothing for protection from sun and insects. Lightweight rainwear is essential. In general, winter is dry and summer wet. Casual clothes are acceptable. Shorts are acceptable everywhere except in churches.

Footwear

Bring walking boots if you have them, otherwise comfortable shoes/trainers with a good grip and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac. Remember - you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

An umbrella is useful for tropical downpours. A torch and waterbottle are recommended. Bring insect repellent, sunscreen and a sunhat.

Tipping

Explore 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
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$ 70, approx. 1'350 Mexican Pesos for group tipping

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

International Departure Taxes
Mexico: there is a 560 Pesos (approx. US$35) departure tax payable pre entry to Guatemala.
Guatemala: there is an entry tax of US$2 / exit tax US$2
MXY only -
Belize: there is a US$20 departure tax
Mexico - 560 Pesos (approx. US$35) will be payable on the Yucatan Extension

Belize

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.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£13	£20	£1.5	£1

Foreign Exchange

Local currency
Belize Dollar (BZD)

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 BZD is approximately BZD 2.50 to the British Pound. US dollars are widely 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 BZD. 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.

Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£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

Mexico

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.

Breakfast price	Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£5	£7	£13	£2	£0.7

Foreign Exchange

Local currency
Mexican New Peso (MXN)

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 MXN is approximately MXN 25 to the British Pound. Sterling can only be exchanged in Mexico City. 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. MX/Y - For those continuing to Guatemala we recommend you change approximately GBP 50-60 into Guatemalan Quetzals at Mexico city airport as there is no longer an exchange at the border crossing into Guatemala.

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 MXN. 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

Transport Information

Bus, Boat

Essential Information

FCO 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 and Commonwealth 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

Mexico: Citizens from UK, New Zealand, Australia, New Zealand, US and Canada require a Mexican Tourist Card to enter. This is obtained on arrival, at some check-in desk of the airline you are travelling with or online in advance from the following website - https://www.inm.gob.mx/fmme/publico/en/solicitud.html . Please note that due to the requirements of the online system, the advance option is only possible if your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your intended date of entry to Mexico. You must take a printed copy with you which you will present on arrival with your passport. You will need to be kept this on you until you exit Mexico.

Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Guatemala: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens. Belize: Visas are not required for UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

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 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 now 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.

Belize

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, TB, 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.

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.

Mexico

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, 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.

Additional Information

Day of the Dead Festival

We have timed certain departures to coincide with the Day of the Dead Festival, experiencing the celebrations from Oaxaca.

The origins of the Day of the Dead Festival can be traced back as far as the indigenous people of Mesoamerica. The Zapotecs, Mayans and Aztecs all had ancient rituals for celebrating the deaths of ancestors. The modern day festivities take place between the 31st October and 2nd November each year, when it is believed to be easier for the souls of the departed to visit the living. Relatives tend to gather in cemeteries where they build private shrines and altars and bring along food, toys and other sentimental items. One of the most common symbols of the Day of the Dead is the skull which many people wear as masks during parades and festivities. The ceremonies are a fascinating insight into local culture and beliefs.

Oaxaca is one of the best places to witness the Day of Dead as the streets become alive with parades and markets selling flowers and local delicacies fill the air with colour and perfume. Many of the festivities take place at night in the local cemeteries and there is a carnival-like atmosphere that brings the streets of Oaxaca to life. Depending on your departure date, you will be in Oaxaca on one or two of the nights of the 31st, 1st and 2nd, and you will experience the different festivities taking place on those days.

Reviews

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