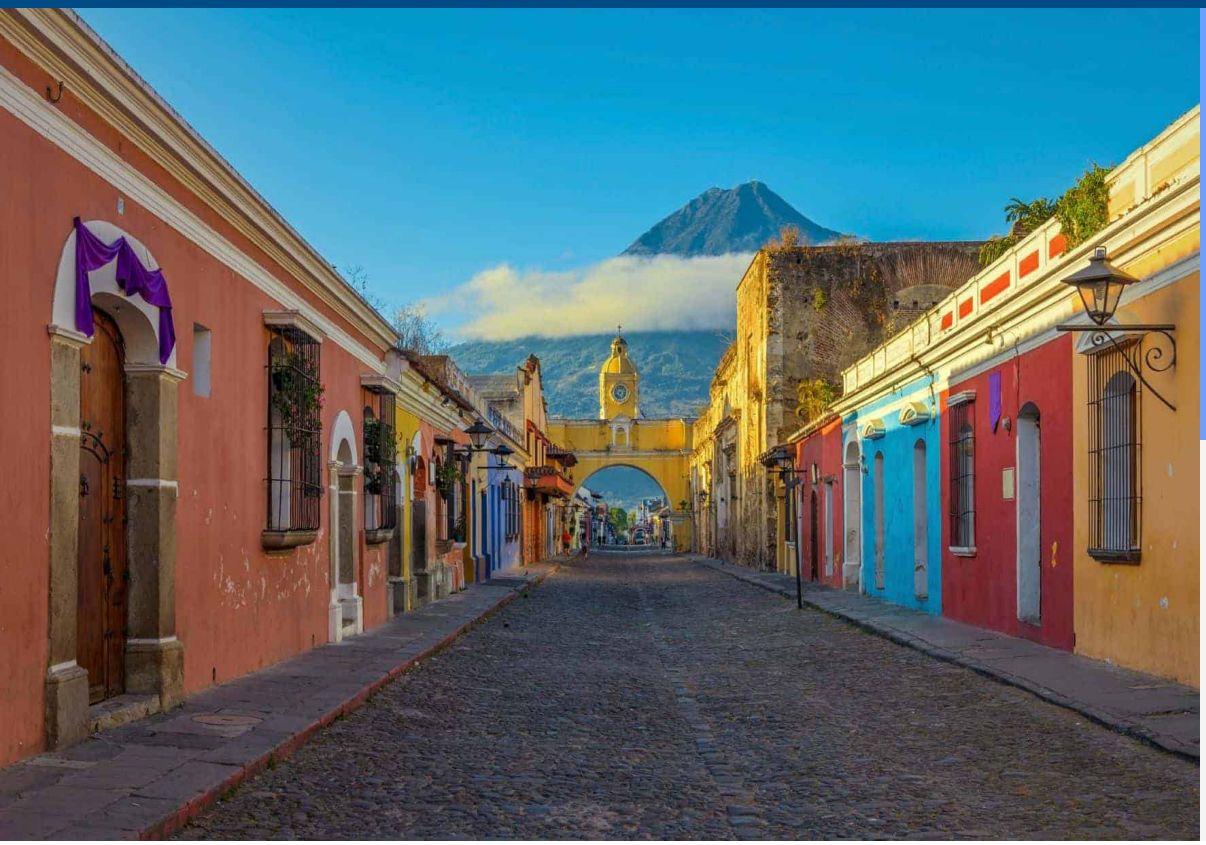
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From
£11,275 GBP

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Prices valid until
30th December 2024

27 days
Duration

Costa Rica, Guatemala
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Journey through Central America: Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala



Apr 22 2024 to May 18 2024

Journey through Central America

Join Odyssey Traveller as we go on a 27-day journey across Central America, exploring Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala. A thread connecting the histories of these countries is the ancient Maya civilisation, which ruled an empire centred in what is now Guatemala. Possessing one of the greatest and most advanced civilisations in the Western Hemisphere, the Maya Empire at the height of its power ruled

Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America) before the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. The ancient ruins of the Mayan civilization continue to dot the landscape as important archaeological sites, which we will explore on these small group guided tours in Central America.

A common colonial past and breathtaking and diverse scenery also unite the countries we will visit. We will learn more about their histories, ancient culture, and natural beauty–their Maya ruins, national park, and active volcanoes–over the course of 27 days. On this small group adventure, we will visit not only the countries' colonial cities and colonial towns, but also their smaller villages that other commercial tours may not include on their itineraries, giving you a fuller cultural and historical picture of the region.

Like our other group tours, our escorted tours in Central America features an Odyssey Program Leader and a handful of local guides who will impart their knowledge about the destinations we visit.







Highlights of our Central America Small Group Tour

Panama

With the bustling city of Panama as a jump-off point, we will go on a boat cruise to take a closer look at one of the greatest engineering feats in modern history, the Panama Canal. We will also visit Casco Viejo ("old quarter", also called Casco Antiguo), a neighbourhood in Panama City inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, and which was established in 1673 by Spanish colonisers and other settlers. We will also visit the community of the indigenous Emberá tribe, who have been living in the region even before "Panama" as a state was formed.

Costa Rica

Our next stop is Costa Rica. In the tobacco centre of San Jose, we will explore the Doka coffee plantation to learn the process of cultivating and processing coffee, which was the country's chief source of income throughout the 19th century. We then experience Costa Rica's natural wonders at the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, followed by Tortuguero

National Park, Lake Arenal, and the misty cloud forest of Monteverde.

Guatemala

We then head to Guatemala, once the centre of ancient Mayan civilisation. We visit the beautiful city of Antigua, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1979. Its full name, “Antigua Guatemala”, means Old Guatemala, and here we can see preserved Mayan ruins and monuments dating back to the 16th century. Its horizon is dominated by three majestic volcanoes.

We go to the shores of Lake Atitlan, the deepest lake in Central America located in the Guatemalan Highlands. It has been renowned as the most beautiful lake in the world, surrounded by volcanoes and wildflowers. The lake is also surrounded by villages wherein Maya culture remains strong, displayed proudly through the people’s traditional dress.

Also in Guatemala, we will go on an hour-long scenic drive through the highlands to the town of San Juan Comalapa, which became famous for its indigenous Kaqchikel painters and the town of Santo Tomas Chichicastenango (“city of nettles”), centre of K’iche’ Maya culture.

Honduras

We briefly cross the border into Honduras, where we visit the town of Copan, occupied for more than two thousand years and now an important archaeological site concerning the Maya civilisation in ancient times.

Back to Guatemala

We continue our journey by boat to Livingston, surrounded by verdant forests and water and which has no land link to the rest of Guatemala. This is a settlement of the Afro-Caribbean Garifuna people, descendants of the slave trade who founded a rich cultural heritage in the city.

Finally, we head to the breathtaking ruins of Tikal, declared a World Heritage Site in 1979. We will explore this sprawling complex founded in







the heart of tropical rainforests, and view the huge temples rising above the forest canopy. This is an incredible place to conclude our multi-week tour of Central America.

For more details, click the ‘Top 5’ or ‘Itinerary’ buttons above! If you’re keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right-hand side of this page.

After visiting the Mayan ruins, you may also be interested to learn about the Incan civilization and see Machu Picchu through these tours:

- Chile, Peru & Bolivia
- Ecuador & Peru
- South America

All of Odyssey Traveller tours are especially designed for the mature-aged or senior traveller, whether travelling alone or with a companion and keen to engage in this small group travel style. Explore our many wonderful adventure tours and sign up! We also have more information on Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala.

External articles to assist you on your visit to Panama and Central America:

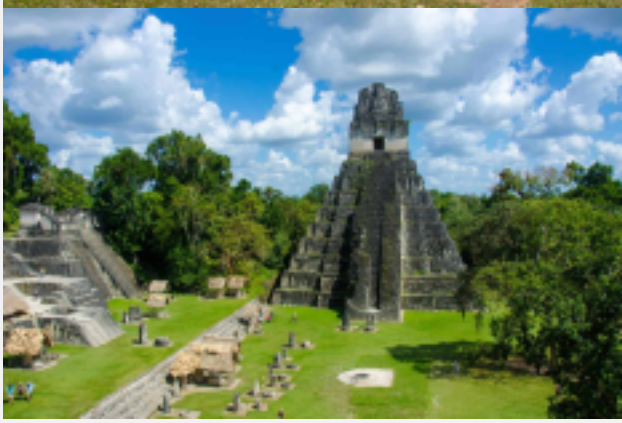
The following external links may help you in planning your visit to Central America.

- Central America Travel
- Central America History
- Cloud forest | ecology | Britannica.com
- Central America travel guide – which is the perfect country for you?

For more information on Odyssey Traveller and our educational small group tours, visit and explore our website, and remember to visit these pages in particular:

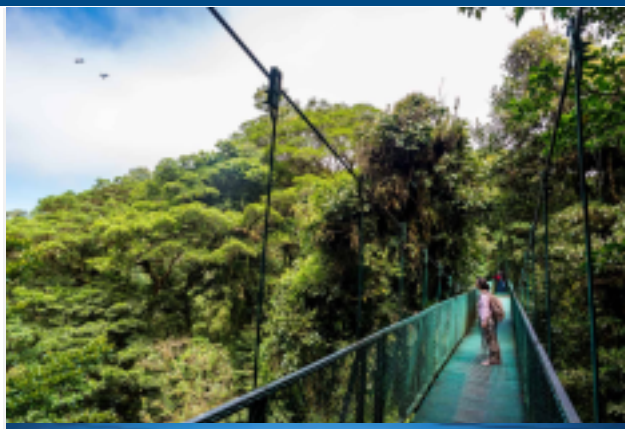






- Terms and conditions applicable for booking an Odyssey Traveller tour.
- FAQ's about Odyssey Traveller

Alternatively, please call or send an email.





Highlights

1. Go on a boat cruise to take a closer look at one of the greatest engineering feats in modern history, the Panama Canal.
2. Experience Costa Rica's natural wonders at the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, Tortuguero National Park, Lake Arenal, and the misty cloud forest of Monteverde.
3. Visit the beautiful city of Antigua Guatemala ("Old Guatemala"), its horizon dominated by three majestic volcanoes.
4. Explore the shores of Lake Atitlan, the deepest lake in Central America located in the Guatemalan Highlands, and renowned as the most beautiful lake in the world.
5. Cross the border into Honduras and visit the town of Copan, an important archaeological site concerning the ancient Maya civilisation.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Panama City

Overview:

Upon arrival in Panama, we make our own way to our hotel. The Odyssey Program Leader will greet the group and the rest of the day is free until we meet again in the evening for our welcome dinner.

Accommodation:

Le Meridien Hotel or similar

Day 2

Locations: Panama City - Casco Viejo

Overview:

Today we will be touring the historic and cultural centre of Panama. Casco Viejo (“old quarter”, also called Casco Antiguo), a neighbourhood in Panama City, has been inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites since 1997. Casco Viejo was established in 1673 by Spanish colonisers and other settlers, and experienced neglect, poverty, and gang violence before finally undergoing restoration in recent years. We will walk around the old quarter to view the colonial buildings and experience its museums and restaurants. We will continue to the Miraflores Locks to view the Panama Canal. The Panama Canal, completed in 1914, is a man-made waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the narrow Isthmus of Panama. Ships travelling through the canal save a lot of time–for example, ships sailing between the east and west coasts of the United States need only go through the canal instead of rounding Cape Horn in South America.

Accommodation:

Le Meridien Hotel or similar

Day 3

Locations: Panama City

Overview:

Today we will visit the community of the indigenous Emberá tribe, who have been living in the region even before “Panama” as a state was formed. This tour will give us an opportunity to know more about their culture and history.

Accommodation:

Le Meridien Hotel or similar

Day 4

Locations: Panama City

Overview:

Having viewed the Panama Canal on Day 2, today we will be taking a closer look at this engineering feat. From the Pacific coast, we take a voyage through the Miraflores Locks, Pedro Miguel, and the Gaillard Cut. We disembark in Gamboa, and travel by land to Colon on the Atlantic Coast. At Colon, we travel via the Panama Canal Railway, the world's first Trans-Continental rail route, which will take us through lush rainforests across the Isthmus of Panama and back to the city.

Accommodation:

Le Meridien Hotel or similar

Day 5

Locations: Panama City

Overview:

Today is a free day! Use this time to rest or explore the area near our accommodation. You can also use this time to pack as we will be flying out of Panama tomorrow.

Accommodation:

Le Meridien Hotel or similar

Day 6

Locations: Panama City - San Jose

Overview:

Today we fly from Panama City to the city of San Jose, capital and largest city of Costa Rica. Founded by the *cabildo* (legal representative of the Spanish Crown) in 1736, San Jose became a tobacco centre and in the 1840s a centre of coffee production. Coffee remained a chief export of Costa Rica and its largest source of income throughout the 19th century. With this history in mind, upon arrival, we commence the tour by exploring the Doka coffee plantation to learn the process of cultivating and processing coffee. We then experience Costa Rica's

natural wonders at the La Paz Waterfall Gardens, viewing the beautiful Magia Bianca Waterfall and the Butterfly Observatory.

Accommodation:

Presidente Hotel or similar

Day 7

Locations: San Jose – Tortuguero

Overview:

After breakfast, we take a drive northeast to the Caribbean side of Costa Rica to visit the Tortuguero National Park. Tortuguero means “turtle catcher”, and the park indeed is an important hatchery in the western Caribbean for green sea turtles, and a nesting place for three other turtle species. Species diversity in Tortuguero National Park is among the highest in Costa Rica, due to the diversity of the habitats within its reserve. Tortuguero is not accessible by road, so the final part of our journey will be by boat. We will stay at our accommodation in the area, and go on a river safari in the early evening. Please note that the park will be warm with high humidity, so dress accordingly!

Accommodation:

Evergreen Lodge or similar

Day 8

Locations: Tortuguero

Overview:

We continue our exploration of the Tortuguero National Park to experience its abundant wildlife and vegetation. The park is home to 57 species of amphibians, 111 species of reptiles, 60 species of mammals and more than 300 species of birds for all or part of the year–which makes for an exciting day of exploration.

Accommodation:

Evergreen Lodge or similar

Day 9

Locations: Tortuguero - Lake Arenal - La Fortuna

Overview:

We leave Tortuguero and drive to the shores of Lake Arenal, Costa Rica's largest landlocked body of water. With a surface covering nearly 85 square kilometres (33 square miles), the lake sits at the base of Arenal Volcano in the northern highlands. We cross the lake by boat and travel on the road to the town of La Fortuna. The rest of the day is at leisure. At our accommodation, we can enjoy views of the volcano and relax.

Accommodation:

Arenal Kioro Hotel or similar

Day 10

Locations: La Fortuna

Overview:

The Arenal Volcano stands 1,633 metres (5,358 ft) high, towering over its surroundings. Currently dormant, the volcano was Costa Rica's most active volcano until 2010. Today we will have a chance to move closer and explore the forest surrounding Arenal Volcano.

Accommodation:

Arenal Kioro Hotel or similar

Day 11

Locations: La Fortuna - Monteverde

Overview:

After breakfast, we cross the Arenal Lake to the small community of Monteverde.

Accommodation:

El Establo Hotel and similar

Day 12

Locations: Monteverde

Overview:

Today we will be exploring the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve, founded in 1972 and home to half of Costa Rica's flora and fauna and 2.5 percent of the world's biodiversity. A "cloud forest" is called as such due to the mists produced by the cooling of wet air currents in the mountains. Sitting at an elevation of 1,600 metres above sea level, the reserve is also mist-covered, and we will experience the same dreamlike atmosphere as we cross the skywalk through the forest canopy.

Accommodation:

El Establo Hotel or similar

Day 13

Locations: Monteverde - Selvatura Park - San Jose

Overview:

Still in Monteverde, we visit another ecological reserve, Selvatura Park. We can walk across the Treetop Walkways to give us fantastic views of the cloud forest. After lunch, we drive to San Jose.

Accommodation:

Holiday Inn Express Forum Hotel or similar

Day 14

Locations: San Jose - Guatemala City - Antigua

Overview:

This morning, we transfer to the San Jose airport for our flight to Guatemala City. Upon arrival in Guatemala City, we travel by road to the beautiful city of Antigua, where we will check into our accommodation.

Accommodation:

El Convento Boutique Hotel or similar

Day 15

Locations: Antigua

Overview:

The beautiful city of Antigua in Guatemala has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1979. Its full name, “Antigua Guatemala”, means Old Guatemala, and here you can see preserved ruins and monuments dating back to the 16th century when it served as capital of the Kingdom of Guatemala. Its horizon is dominated by three majestic volcanoes. In the morning we will enjoy a guided walking tour of Antigua, and have the rest of the day free to spend at our leisure.

Accommodation:

El Convento Boutique Hotel or similar

Day 16

Locations: Antigua - San Miguel Escobar - Antigua

Overview:

Brightly coloured chicken buses (modified buses) ply the roads of Antigua, and we will board one for our journey to San Miguel Escobar. We transfer to 4WDs for a short ride to coffee fields to learn about coffee production and also take part in coffee picking. We will enjoy lunch with a local family before heading back to our hotel in Antigua.

Accommodation:

El Convento Boutique Hotel or similar

Day 17

Locations: Antigua - Comalapa - Lake Atitlan

Overview:

After breakfast, we go on an hour-long scenic drive through the highlands to the town of San Juan Comalapa, which became famous for its indigenous Kaqchikel painters. Kaqchikel painter Andrés Curruchich (1891–1969) made oil paintings depicting village life and traditions, and gained international renown. He then decided to teach a new generation of Kaqchikel artists. We will take a tour of the town’s local market, which

also display paintings and murals of the local artists. After lunch, we continue on to Lake Atitlan, which we will explore in the next few days. The rest of the day can be spent at our leisure.

Accommodation:

Hotel Atitlan or similar

Day 18

Locations: Lake Atitlan

Overview:

Lake Atitlan ("between the waters"), located in the Guatemalan Highlands, is the deepest lake in Central America. It has been renowned as the most beautiful lake in the world, surrounded by volcanoes and wildflowers. The lake is surrounded by villages wherein Maya culture remains strong, displayed proudly through the people's traditional dress. Today we will go on a leisurely cruise and visit a number of these villages and communities.

Accommodation:

Hotel Atitlan or similar

Day 19

Locations: Lake Atitlan - Chichicastenango - Guatemala City

Overview:

We leave Lake Atitlan and continue on to the town of Santo Tomas Chichicastenango ("city of nettles"). The town is the centre of K'iche' Maya culture–a huge majority of the residents belong to the K'iche, who speak both their indigenous language and Spanish. Chichicastenango hosts market days twice a week (Thursdays and Sundays) where traders from all over Guatemala sell their goods. We will take part in this vibrant atmosphere and see the textiles, pottery, and flowers, among others, on display. After lunch we drive to Guatemala City.

Accommodation:

Westin Camino Real or similar

Day 20

Locations: Guatemala City

Overview:

In 1773, Antigua Guatemala (which we have visited earlier) was destroyed by an earthquake, prompting the creation of a new centre. That city became Guatemala City, capital of the captaincy general of Guatemala in 1776 until it became the capital of the independent Republic of Guatemala in the 19th century. Guatemala City is the economic and cultural heart of Guatemala, and today we will have a walking tour to take in its colonial architecture and Mayan history narrated by its art galleries.

Accommodation:

Westin Camino Real or similar

Day 21

Locations: Guatemala City - Copan

Overview:

After breakfast, we begin our five-hour journey to the border between Guatemala and Honduras. Near the Guatemala-Honduras border is the town of Copan, occupied for more than two thousand years and now an important archaeological site of Mayan civilisation. After lunch at our hotel, we visit Macaw Mountain, a bird rescue, rehabilitation and release centre.

Accommodation:

Marina Copan Hotel or similar

Day 22

Locations: Copan

Overview:

Today, we will continue our exploration of the ancient Mayan world in Copan. Copan was once a powerful city ruling a kingdom in the western Honduras, and we will be able to view its ruins and learn more about its

history today.

Accommodation:

Marina Copan Hotel or similar

Day 23

Locations: Copan - Quirigua - Livingston

Overview:

We cross the border back into Guatemala and visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Quirigua, another ancient Maya archaeological site. Its monuments, carved stelae and sculpted calendars are important in providing insight to Mayan civilisation. After exploring the site, we transfer to Puerto Barrios (Guatemala's main Caribbean Sea port) for our transfer by boat to the town of Livingston, where we will stay for the night.

Accommodation:

Hotel Villa Caribe or similar

Day 24

Locations: Livingston - Tikal

Overview:

This morning we explore Livingston. Livingston is surrounded by verdant forests and water and sits at the mouth of the Río Dulce at the Gulf of Honduras, with no road connection to the rest of Guatemala. This is a settlement of the Afro-Caribbean Garifuna people, who founded a rich cultural heritage in the city. We enjoy a boat tour on the Rio Dulce, and after lunch we journey north to the Mayan city of Tikal.

Accommodation:

Jungle Lodge or similar

Day 25

Locations: Tikal

Overview:

Tikal is located in the ruins of an ancient and great Mayan city, declared a World Heritage Site in 1979. We will explore this sprawling complex founded in the heart of a rainforest, and view the huge temples rising above the forest canopy. This is an incredible place to conclude our multi-week tour of Central America.

Accommodation:

Jungle Lodge or similar

Day 26

Locations: Tikal - Flores - Guatemala

Overview:

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Guatemala City. We will enjoy our final night with a farewell dinner to look back on the amazing sights we've experienced together on this tour.

Accommodation:

Westin Camino Real or similar

Day 27

Locations: Guatemala City

Overview:

Our tour and our services conclude after breakfast.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 26 nights hotel accommodation.
- 26 Breakfasts, 10 lunches plus 1 boxed Lunch, and 21 dinners.

- 3 internal flights including taxes (economy class)
- Transport by coach.
- All sightseeing tours applicable to the itinerary, including entrance fees.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Services of an Odyssey tour leader.
- English speaking local guides.
- Detailed tour information.

What's not included in our Tour

- Return international airfares including taxes.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Visas where required to visit each country.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.