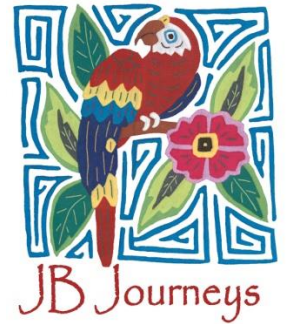


2024 Guatemala – Semana Santa

March 18-26



Considered one of the most colorful celebrations in the New World, processions and vigils are scheduled throughout Lent, and none are as beautiful and magical as those in Antigua, Guatemala, the lovely colonial city just one hour from the capitol. We have chosen to attend the amazing Palm Sunday procession, where thousands of men in purple Roman robes carry life sized - or larger - wooden figures, which tell the Easter story. The processions travel through the streets of Antigua, passing over elaborate, colorful alfombras, or carpets, made of flower petals and colored sawdust. This tradition has gone on for centuries; there is mention of it back to the 1500's.

Also in Antigua, we visit a small coffee co-op, part of a 'direct trade' project. One of the growers in the co-op will show us around his or her small finca, where coffee and other crops are grown to feed the family. After visiting the farm, we walk to the farmer's home, we'll see how coffee is separated, roasted and ground, followed by lunch with the family. Our chocolate lesson will include some history served along with the beans which we will toast and grind, to make hot drinks and candies.



The Maya in Guatemala are known for their beautifully woven costumes, which differ from one village to the next. At the famous Chichicastenango Market, we will have the chance to see the variety and do some bargaining and shopping, before we continue to Lake Atitlan. On any list of 'most beautiful lakes in the world' will be Lake Atitlan, and you'll see why. Ringed by volcanoes and a dozen indigenous villages, this is a stunning place. One morning will be spent on the lake, learning about the villages, the people and the interesting geography.

We will have tasted some interesting foods in Guatemala, and we have a chance to learn a few cooking secrets, as a local chef shares her recipes with us.

Much of our tour is on foot, really the easiest way to get around the cobble-stoned streets of these old towns. We'll also walk among coffee bushes in the De La Gente fincas. We recommend this itinerary for those comfortable with lots of walking, and it can be hot this time of year.

Day 1 - Monday (D)

Arrive Guatemala today anytime. (see flight suggestions) You will be met by our driver for the 1.5 hour transfer to Antigua, the ancient capitol.

Our home in Antigua will be **Hotel Los Pasos**, a small hotel in the old city. Hotel Los Pasos is located on the legendary Calle de Los Pasos, two blocks from the Temple of San Francisco, one block from Escuela

de Cristo, and only minutes from the central park of Antigua. The hotel is in an old colonial house with wide corridors and colorful gardens.

We'll meet in the lobby and head to a welcome dinner.



Day 2 - Tuesday (B,L)

Around 9 am we'll gather in the lobby for a walking tour, which



focuses on the city's history, cultural trends, and restoration efforts. We visit the City Hall Palace, Palace of the Captain's General, the Cathedral with its majestic ruins, and the best museums in town at Paseo de los Museos in the Santo Domingo Hotel complex. We will walk back to the hotel for a free afternoon, or roam around on our own. We will have dinner together, but we must make it ourselves! We will take a cooking class to learn about the traditional foods of Guatemala, with a local chef.

Lunch on your own.

Day 3 - Wednesday (B,L,D)

We check out of the hotel for 3 nights. (You can leave some of your luggage at Hotel los Pasos if you wish. If you do, be sure to lock and label your remaining bag.)

After breakfast, we will meet in the lobby for a visit to the village of San Miguel Escobar (just outside Antigua) and the coffee *fincas* (farms) of **De la Gente**, a direct trade coffee co-op.



Wear comfortable shoes and dress according to the weather, as we walk to the farmer's patch of nutrient-rich soil, just below the volcano, and gain a whole new perspective on your daily cup of java. Here we will witness the steps involved as they explain how to pick, process, and roast your coffee.

Then we continue to the village and to the farmer's home, where he or she demonstrates how they separate the freshly picked coffee fruit by density, husk the fruit, ferment, and wash the beans, dry them, remove the inner hull, sort by size, color and grade, roast the beans, and – finally – taste. Experience the difference between traditional and modern roasting and brewing techniques. De la Gente provides coffee farmers with training and support that enable them to create profitable, marketable products, thereby allowing them to improve their quality of life and help their communities in an environmentally and economically sustainable way. And then we join the farmer and family for a typical lunch. This truly is an example of sustainable tourism.

After lunch, we hop back on the bus and head to Lake Atitlan, a ride of about 2.5-3 hours, with a comfort stop en route. Finally we'll arrive at the beautiful lake and our home for the next three nights at **Jenna's River B&B**. The inn is located just outside the town of Panajachel, with spectacular views of the lake. Once checked in, we'll have dinner here. This place is well known for creativity in the kitchen, and you'll love the breakfasts also.

The creator is Jennifer Bigman, a world citizen, has been in Guatemala for around 30 years, most of that time running a funky B&B



in Panajachel. A couple of years ago she moved location to a beautiful spot just outside of town. Instead of rooms, we'll be sleeping in yurts, but possibly the nicest yurts you've seen, decorated with local furniture and colorful textiles.

Day 4 - Thursday (B)

After breakfast we'll take a one-hour shuttle to the village of Chichicastenango, known for the famous market. When we arrive, we'll orient ourselves and set a meeting time and place for departure. You will have the day shop at the market, visit the church and cemetery. Lunch on your own.

Market day in "Chichi" is a mad orgy of sights, sounds, and smells. Maya craft sellers from across the highlands set up makeshift booths around the central plaza, spilling over on to sidewalks, the church steps, and up various side streets. A broad selection of Guatemalan handicrafts is available, including carved-wood masks and religious figures, ceramic wares, and an immense selection of the country's amazing native textiles. In addition to the craftworks, vendors sell fruits, vegetables, flowers, medicinal herbs, and more.

*The **Iglesia de Santo Tomás** was built by Dominican priests more than 450 years ago on top of an ancient Maya worship site. It remains the heart and soul of Chichicastenango and -- to this day -- is used as much for traditional Maya ceremonial purposes as it is for Catholic Mass.*

*Local Maya can almost always be found on the steps leading up to the church, burning copal incense and candles, and offering prayer. Each of the 18 steps represents one of the months in the Maya calendar. Rather than the expected pews, you'll find makeshift shrines and altars spread out on the floor with pine needles and candles. It was in the church's convent that the oldest known copy of the ancient **Popol Vuh**, the Maya holy book, was discovered.*

*Chichicastenango's **cemetery** is filled with brightly painted mausoleums and above-ground crypts. It is very photogenic and atmospheric, and with luck you may witness a shaman ceremony, which is quite fascinating. Feel free to wander but be respectful of the situation.*

Around 3 or 4:00 pm, we'll meet up with our driver and head back to Panajachel, about 45 minutes. You can stay in the village or head back to Jenna's for dinner on your own.

Day 5 - Friday (B, L)



Aldous Huxley famously claimed that **Lake Atitlán** was "the most beautiful lake in the world." Formed thousands of years ago in the crater of a massive volcano, Lake Atitlán is more than 10 miles across at its widest point. It sits at nearly a mile high in altitude, and is surrounded on all sides by steep, verdant hills, picturesque Maya villages, and massive volcanoes with striking pointed cones.

The views from the lakeshore, the hillsides above the lake, and the boats plying its waters are all stunning, and seemingly endlessly varied, as the light and cloud cover shift constantly throughout the day. Our boat trip takes us around the lake to visit indigenous villages. In San Juan la Laguna, we'll visit a women's weaving coop and learn the traditional



methods of dying threads and using back-strap looms to create beautiful textiles. We'll have the opportunity to see inside the home of one of the weavers, as we are invited for lunch.

Time permitting, we'll visit another village, returning to the dock in Panajachel in the afternoon. Again you can stay in town for dinner or head back to Jenna's. Dinner on your own.

Day 6 – Saturday (B)

Late morning, we will depart for the return ride to Antigua. Back to Los Pasos and dinner on your own. There may be processions in town.

Day 7 - Palm Sunday (B)



After breakfast, we head to the main square and join a walking tour to witness the Palm Sunday procession, known as *La Reseña or Domingo de Ramos*, which departs from La Merced church. About 4,000 participate in this majestic procession, carrying a wooden Christ which was sculpted in 1650, and the procession has occurred since that year.

The rest of the day is free. There will be lots going on in Antigua this day and we can see the procession in different parts of town, during the day and also into the night. Lunch and dinner on your own.

Day 8 - Monday (B, D)



Holy vigils, or *velaciones*, take place in the churches around town and we'll visit the spectacular display at La Merced. Additional *alfombras* are created inside the church, in front of the altars, surrounded by candles.

We'll then walk to **ChocoMuseo** to learn about **cacao** and **chocolate**, the production process and history of cacao since the Maya, 1000 years ago, and then make your own chocolate, right from the

cacao beans!

This evening we'll meet up and walk to farewell dinner at a local restaurant.



Day 9 - Tuesday (B)

We'll depart for the airport about 3.5 hours before flight.

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Note: The order & sites visit may vary due to weather, road conditions, and other factors beyond our control.

Interested in visiting Tikal before or after our trip? We recommend you plan early due to Holy Week. Let us know!

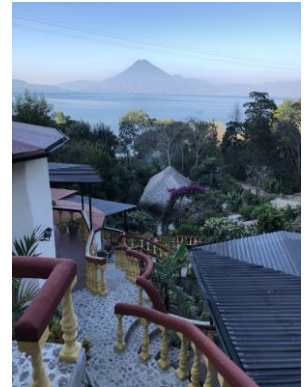


Lodging: *Hotels confirmed at the time of publishing. Alternatives may be necessary but will be of similar quality.*



Hotel Los Pasos is located on the southern side of town, about 5-7 minutes walk to the main plaza. The hotel is in an old colonial house with wide corridors sunny and colorful gardens. The rooms have two double beds and bath, tastefully decorated with high quality fabrics. All rooms offer hair dryers, robes, bottled water, pillow menu, safe deposit, and minibar. Delicious and creative breakfast is served in the restaurant or rooftop.

Jenna's River B&B outside Panajachel has the best views of the stunning lake and volcanos. Only 5 minutes from the town of Panajachel, the B&B features a grouping of yurts placed on a slope with a lovely view. Each yurt is named for a local animal or bird and is decorated with traditional handicrafts. All yurts have a hot water private bath, with soaps and shampoos. Hair dryers are available at the front desk. WiFi is available throughout the property. Jenna's gardens are a pleasant spot with a swimming pool. Breakfast always includes a good selection of fresh tropical fruits, homemade yogurt, cereals and freshly baked bread.



Note: *While hotels in Guatemala do have hot water in showers, they may not in the sink. Also, they may not have washcloths, so if you are used to using one, we suggest you bring your own along with a Ziplock bag to carry it.*

Guatemala - Culture & Culinary – March 18-26, 2024

- Minimum 6 people, maximum 10 people. Escorted by Jean Warneke of JB Journeys
- Cost for 2024: **\$1850** per person in double occupancy, with minimum 8. With 6: \$1975.
- Single supplement \$500 (very limited) *Singles are either a double room at single rate or a smaller room.*
- To confirm your spot, please complete the [reservation form](#)
- We will send a link for your deposit of \$500 per person. Final payment will be due **January 10, 2024**.
- Cancellation policy—Deposit is non-refundable after 30 days. At 60 days, 50% penalty. Inside 60 days – non-refundable. Name changes may be allowed. No refunds for unused parts of tour.

Included

- Transportation as listed by van (note much of our visits will be walks)
- Eight nights in B&B with taxes included.
- Daily breakfast
- Bi-lingual local guides
- Entry fees for listed excursions
- 3 lunches, 3 dinners, with gratuities
- Basic gratuities to guides, drivers

Not Included:

- International airfare (to Guatemala City)
- Meals not listed
- Gratuities at hotels, breakfast
- Drinks during meals
- Personal Insurance



Suggested flights (with connections from other cities) to arrive Guatemala City-GUA-on March 18, depart March 26*

If you prefer to arrive earlier, we can arrange transportation and lodging at an extra cost.

United from/to Houston IAH

- United 1751 depart Houston 9.45 am, arrive Guatemala City 11:53 am
- United 1903, departing Guatemala 12:30 pm, arrive Houston 4.34 pm

Or Delta from/to Atlanta

- Delta 1830, departs Atlanta 10.05 am, arrives Guatemala 11:52 am
- Delta 1831, departs Guatemala 1:06 pm, arrives Atlanta 6:30 pm

Or American from/to Miami

- AA 2241, departs DFW 10.15 am, arrives Guatemala 12:41 pm
- AA 1006, departs Guatemala 1:13 pm, arrives Miami 5.55 pm

* *Flight numbers and times may change. Daylight savings time often falls around this time, which may alter times.*