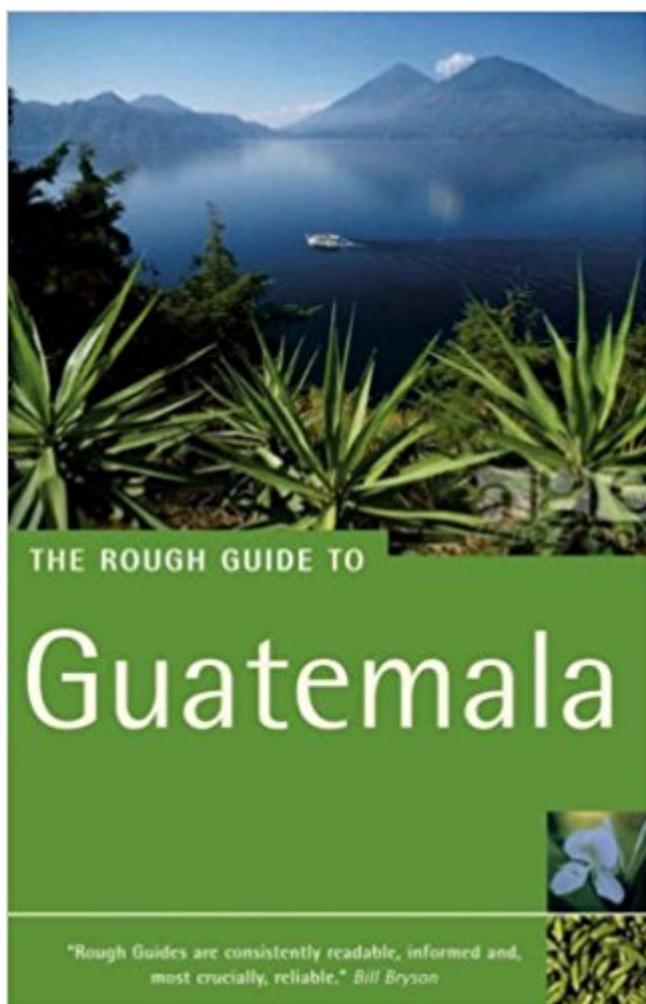


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The Rough Guide To Guatemala 3 (Rough Guide Travel Guides)



Synopsis

The Rough Guide to Guatemala is the essential guide to this captivating country. A 24-page, full-colour introduction gives an inspiring insight into Guatemala's highlights, from the delightful colonial city of Antigua to the ancient Maya ruins in PetÃ¡n. The guide includes extensive and reliable reviews of all the best places to eat, drink and stay for visitors on every budget. There is plenty of practical advice when travelling to remote highland areas, plus detailed information on jungle treks, river rafting and volcano climbs. The guide also includes thorough and informed commentary on Guatemala's politics, indigenous culture, diverse landscape and spectacular wildlife, as well as detailed maps and plans for every region.

Book Information

Paperback: 528 pages

Publisher: Rough Guides; 3 edition (February 20, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1843534991

ISBN-13: 978-1843534990

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.9 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars 23 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,569,007 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in Books > Travel > Central America > Honduras #84 in Books > Travel > Central America > Guatemala #865 in Books > Travel > Central America > General

Customer Reviews

After two years of travelling the world, Iain Stewart arrived in Guatemala and liked it so much he stayed. A few years on, he is the co-author of Rough Guides to the Maya World, Central America and author of Ibiza & Formentera DIRECTIONS. Now based in South London, he is also a journalist and restaurant critic and takes every opportunity to return to Central America.Â

Where to go Whilst each region has its own particular attractions, it is to the Maya-dominated western highlands that most travellers head first, and rightly so. The colour, the markets, the fiestas, the culture, and above all the people make it a wholly unique experience. And it seems almost an unfair bonus that all this is set in countryside of such mesmerizing beauty: for photographers, it's heaven. Among the highlights are Antigua, the delightful colonial capital whose laid-back

atmosphere and caf society contrasts with the hectic, fume-filled bustle of the current capital Guatemala City, and Lake Atitl‡n, ringed by sentinel-like volcanoes in a setting of exceptional beauty. The shores of the lake are dotted with traditional indigenous villages, as well as a few tranquil low-key settlements, such as Santa Cruz and San Marcos, where there are just a handful of hotels and some good walking possibilities. More lively is the booming lakeside resort of Panajachel, with excellent restaurants, cafs and textile stores, and the bohemian San Pedro whose alternative scene and rock-bottom prices attract travellers from all over the world. High up above the lake, the traditional Maya town of Solol‡ has one of the country's best markets (and least-touristy), a complete contrast to the vast twice-weekly affair at Chichicastenango, with its incredible selection of weavings and handicrafts. Further west, the sleepy provincial city of Quetzaltenango (Xela) makes a good base for exploring the market towns of Momostenango, famed for its wool production, and San Francisco el Alto, before heading north to Huehuetanango, gateway to Guatemala's greatest mountain range, the Cuchumatanes. Here, you'll find excellent walking, superb scenery and some of the most isolated and traditional villages in the Maya world, with Nebaj, in the Ixil triangle, and Todos Santos both making good bases from which to explore. The Pacific coast (usually taken to mean the entire coastal plain) is generally hot and dull, with scrubby, desolate beaches backed by a smattering of mangrove swamps. The sole exception is the relaxed seaside village of Monterrico, part of a wildlife reserve where you can watch sea turtles coming ashore to lay their eggs. Inland, the region includes some of the country's most productive farmland, devoted purely to commercial agriculture, and dotted with bustling urban centres such as Esquintla and Retalhuleu. Points of interest are thin on the ground, confined mainly to the pre-Columbian ruins of Abaj Takalik and the three minor sites around the town of Santa Luc'a. None of these, however, can compete with the archeological wonders of Petn. This unique lowland area, which makes up about a third of the country, is covered with dense rainforest - only now threatened by development - that is alive with wildlife and dotted with superb Maya ruins. The only town of any size is Flores, superbly situated on Lake Petn Ixta, from where you can easily reach Tikal, the most impressive of all the Maya sites, rivalling any ruin in Latin America. The region's rainforest also hides numerous smaller sites, including Ceibal, Yaxchil‡n (just across the border in Mexico) and Uaxactœn, while adventurous travellers may seek out Petn's more remote ruins, such as the dramatic, pre-Classic El Mirador (possibly even larger than Tikal), which requires days of tough travel to reach. Finally, the east of the country includes another highland area, this time with little to offer the visitor, though in the Motagua valley you'll find the superb Maya site of Quirigu‡, while just over the border in Honduras are the first-class ruins of

Copa. Further into Honduras are the idyllic Bay Islands, whose pristine coral reefs offer some of the finest scuba-diving and snorkelling in the Caribbean. You can also travel up into the rain-soaked highlands of the Verapaces, similar in many ways to the central highlands, though fresher and greener. Here, Lake Izabal drains, via the Río Dulce through a dramatic gorge, to the Caribbean. At the mouth of the river is the funky town of Livingston, an outpost of Caribbean culture and home to Guatemala's only black community. When to go Guatemala enjoys one of the most pleasant climates on earth, with the bulk of the country enjoying warm or hot days with mild or cool evenings year-round. The immediate climate is largely determined by altitude. In those areas between 1300 and 1600 metres, which includes Guatemala City, Antigua, Lake Atitlán, Chichicastenago and Cobán, the air is almost always fresh and the nights cool and, despite the heat of the mid-day sun, humidity is never a problem. However, parts of the provinces of Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango and the Ixil triangle are above this height, so have a cool, damp climate with distinctly cold nights. Low-lying Petén suffers from sticky, steamy conditions most of the year, as do the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, though here at least you can usually rely on the welcome relief of a sea breeze. The rainy season runs roughly from May to October, with the worst of the rain falling in September and October. In Petén, however, the season can extend into December, whilst around Cobán and on the Caribbean coast it can rain at any time of the year. Even at the height of the wet season, though, the rain is usually confined to late afternoon downpours with most of the rest of the day being warm and pleasant. In many parts of the country you can travel without disruption throughout the rainy season, although in the more out-of-the-way places, like the Cuchumatanes, flooding may slow you down by converting the roads into a sea of mud. Also, if you intend visiting Petén's more remote ruins, you'd be well advised to wait until February, as the mud can be thigh deep at the height of the rains. The busiest time for tourists is between December and March, though plenty of people take their summer vacations here in July and August. This is also the period when the language schools and hotels are at their fullest, and many of them hike their prices correspondingly. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As we flipped through the Rough Guide to Guatemala 2002 edition about a month ago, we were really impressed with the layout and the backdoor feel that the Rough Guide had as opposed to the more conventional guide books. Our only hesitation was that the practical information like hotels and transportation schedules might be out of date because it was published so long ago. We found out that a new version of the Rough Guide to Guatemala was going to come out right before we left for

our trip so we decided to hold out until it was published. We were so excited when it arrived and couldn't wait to get to Guatemala. When we arrived, however, it became immediately apparent that Rough Guides had not bothered to live up to their claim of reliability. The information in the guide was completely outdated. We ran into logistical problems at every turn. I understand that Guatemala is one of the countries that is in a state of constant flux but some of the hotel recommendations in the book had disappeared years ago. On the whole, the book was good for the ideas of what to see and do and the history of the country but logically speaking, it left much to be desired. We ended up forgetting the book completely for logistical planning and asked the locals instead.

Beautiful pictures and lots of useful and interesting information.

Purchased this title in conjunction with the Lonely Guide book and used both in the planning process for a family trip with two minor children. We brought both books in our luggage, but only this one came out during day trips in the backpack. You'll find the descriptions of specific locations spot on, I wished that both books had more detail on how Guatemala daily life functions. Much of the books need to be focused on what your likely experiences will be, I would have liked to have had more insight into the flow of life beyond the tourist zone.

Definitely helped on my visit to Guatemala. Be sure to see the Mayan ruins in the northern part of the country

I just returned yesterday from 10 days in Guatemala and Belize and found the Rough Guide invaluable. I went with 7 friends and between us we had Lonely Planet's "Central America", Lonely Planet's "Guatemala" and Fodor's "Guatemala and Belize". The 2 of us carrying Rough Guide were in the most demand and we relied on it for all our housing and most of our eating recommendations. In addition, the book begins with 33 things you must see/do in Guatemala and we hit most of them. Housing: Finding a place to stay was not difficult, but in Guatemala the comfort can vary a lot even in the budget range. We were able to find clean, comfortable and affordable accomodations at all of our stops. I highly recommend the Hotel Santa Clara in Antigua which has a lovely courtyard and older colonial rooms (ours had a cute, decorative fireplace). All the pricings for accomodations were on target throughout our trip (with the Santa Clara coming in at about 17\$ per person based on double occupancy). Depending on how much you want to "rough" it - a \$5 difference can be a big one in Guatemala and we often reserved rooms at 2 places in each of our locations. If you are

traveling in a smaller group or by yourself you probably don't even need to call ahead. Food: We used this book for many of our eating recommendations and it never failed to give us an idea of the type of food and quality to expect. History and Culture: The book was enjoyable to read and provided some good information on preparation, recent happenings as well as history. A little more info on Tikal would have been great - perhaps a walking tour guide - but there are other books available for that and the site is huge. Overall: I plan to use Rough Guide again in the future. After my less than desirable experience in Peru with Lonely Planet, as their descriptions are often flat and pricing out of date despite the "new" edition.

It's a fine book, but is three years old. One expects prices to change, but many other things are changing as well. For example, there are no longer regular boats from Flores to San Andres and Jose, but there are regular vans and buses over an improved road.

It looks like the third edition ("Rough Guide to Guatemala 3") will be released January 30, 2006. Unless you're leaving real soon, I would wait for that to be released.

This book seems to miss the mark in several aspects. I used it for a trip earlier this year but ended up buying another guidebook once there. In terms of content, it either ends up giving you waaay too much information (to where it reads like an encyclopedia) or not enough, depending on the subject. It just wasn't practical and the information was often outdated, to boot. It's also marred by endless pages of text with nary an occasional black & white photo at the end of a chapter (usually overly dense in printing and uniquely uninteresting). True to its name, it was ROUGH and not very user-friendly. The poor layout causes you to strain your eyes while searching for needed information, especially on bouncy roads in a car or bus. It's like flipping through a phone book (some of the subject headings for local services are vaguely labeled as 'listings'). I'd wait and get the new Moon Guatemala and/or Lonely Planet Guatemala. I see both companies are releasing new editions in September. Insight Guides is the book for fantastic color images, though it's not as good for practical information. Note that most of the positive reviews for Rough Guide Guatemala pre-date the release of this latest edition when there were fewer options on the market. Bottom line: This may have once been an OK guidebook to Guatemala, but there are much better options now. Moon Guatemala (Moon Handbooks) Lonely Planet Guatemala Insight Guides Guatemala, Belize And the Yucatan (Insight Guides Guatemala, Belize, Yucatan)

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