

A Cultural Tour of Guatemala & Semana Santa with John & Anita March 27 – April 5, 2018



We know Central and South America

There is no substitute for living in, visiting regularly and traveling these countries extensively. We have lived in Guatemala and Argentina and currently Panama. In addition, we have explored Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Nicaragua, Belize, Honduras, Mexico, and Costa Rica thoroughly for the past 15 years. **Anita Rogers**, fluent in Spanish, lived in Guatemala for 25 years, started her own business, and was a collector of Maya weavings, as well as Spanish Colonial art and antiques. She has been around the travel business most of her life, as her family owns the beautiful Hotel Atitlán, on Lake Atitlán, in the Guatemala highlands. Her husband, **John Korte**, is a former financial advisor to affluent families across the U.S.

We understand local customs and business practices. We eat in the restaurants, stay at the hotels and ride the transportation, personally experiencing every aspect of our tours and workshops. We know the hidden treasures as well as the little things only locals know. Our experience, our relationships and our knowledge of these countries allows us to provide a worry-free, life enriching travel experience.

We personally love our chosen destinations, Guatemala, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. Most of our venues in both countries, are listed in the book *1000 Places to See Before You Die*, by Patricia Schultz. We have selected colorful routes, unique hotels, colonial era haciendas, exquisite dining, and amazing venues reflecting the uniqueness of each area we visit. Our hope is that each of our travelers and artists will return home with a lasting impression and rewarding memories of the colorful Maya and Inca cultures, and the beautiful lands of Central and South America.

Travel Highlights...

Antigua and Semana Santa...

In a verdant valley, surrounded by lofty volcanoes, the picturesque, time trapped city of Antigua will capture your heart. The romantic ambiance of its richly

textured ruins, draped in vibrant bougainvillea, its peaceful parks, cobblestone streets, churches, monasteries, and colonial homes with courtyards provide artistic inspiration.

Semana Santa (Holy Week) refers to the week proceeding Easter Sunday, and is the most important holiday in Central America. *Semana Santa* is a festive event, featuring religious processions and colorful carpets in the streets. Antigua's *Semana Santa* celebrations are perhaps the most extravagant and impressive in all Latin America, rivaled only by a similar event that takes place in Seville, Spain. This is a moving "World Cultural" event you will not soon forget.

You will stay at the [Hotel Casa Santo Domingo](#) (built from the ruins of a 16th century monastery). The sounds of running water in the stone-carved fountains, candlelight throughout the hallways, and fresh flowers everywhere, will simply take your breath away.

Chichicastenango...

Come ready to shop and bargain in this colorful 800 year old K'iche' market where Maya families come to buy and trade. Find fabulous buys on exquisite textiles, handicrafts, and brightly painted masks, all replicating designs and techniques passed down through many generations. One of the most memorable sights is of the Maya women wearing their colorful traditional clothing of hand woven Huipiles (blouses) and Cortes (skirts). In the 400-year-old Santo Tomas Church, which is built over a Pre-Columbian Maya temple, see a combination of Maya rituals and Catholic worship.

Lake Atitlán and Villages...

Drive through the highlands of Guatemala with its majestic mountains and lush valleys to Lake Atitlán. Surrounded by three towering volcanoes that stand guard over quaint Maya villages, the lake is considered by many to be "the most beautiful lake in the world". Feel suspended in time as you watch the Maya fishermen in their dugout cayucos, practicing their trade just as their ancestors have done for centuries. This dramatic landscape, an area rich in Maya culture and traditions, will create memories to last a lifetime. At Spanish Colonial style [Hotel Atitlan](#), our home base; discover botanical gardens displaying over 200 varieties of roses, an extensive orchid collection, a tropical heliconia garden, English style knot gardens, and a collection of exotic birds.

Guatemala City...

Discover the beauty of the luxury [Hotel Vista Real](#), overlooking the City and facing the massive Fuego and Agua volcanoes. The décor in this luxury hotel offers a perfect blend of Guatemalan and Mexican art and architecture.

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Tue 27th: Fly into Guatemala City where you'll be met at the airport and taken to the beautiful Monastery turned 5 Star Hotel, Casa Santo Domingo in Antigua.

Wed 28st: We will explore the five museums and the archeological sites of this 16th Century Monastery. We will visit the Church San Francisco where Guatemala's only Saint is entombed. Next up is a visit to the Jade Factory and Museum to learn about the discovery of the Lost Jade Mines of the Maya (lost for over 500 years). Here is the place to buy jade. An evening presentation and slide show on *Semana Santa*, by a renowned local author who has published several books on Antigua. (B/L/D)

Thu 29th: We will walk through the calles and avenidas of Antigua to Parque Central, the Cathedral, and the Captains General Palace. After learning some of the history of this Colonial City we hasten to the first procession out of the Church San Francisco, viewing the amazing works of art laid out on the cobbled streets; Alfombras (carpets made of colored saw dust, fruits and flowers), created especially for the processions to pass over. Later, a special visit to the Convento Capuchinas, one of the most unknown and misunderstood, but best preserved of all the colonial buildings in the new world. (B/L/D)

Fri 30th: Early morning walk to La Merced Church to witness the largest and most solemn of the Lent and Holy Week processions – soldiers taking Jesus to be crucified. Viewing of the famous carpets along the route. Some free time in the early afternoon, then viewing of the procession depicting Jesus' crucifixion, and its aftermath. (B/D)

Sat 31st: Free morning to explore Antigua. Leave for Lake Atitlán, stopping for lunch in the highlands at a mountain smokehouse. Arriving at Hotel Atitlán, breathe in the fresh mountain air and relax in the tranquility of this charming boutique hotel, with its views across the lake of three towering volcanoes. The Botanical gardens here are arguably one of the finest in all of Central America. (B/L/D)

Sunday 1st: Morning excitement builds as we enter the crowded market of Chichicastenago. The steps of the Church Santo Tomas are filled with incense and women selling flowers, a sight to remember. Photo ops abound. You'll find colorful textiles, carved wood Saints, handcrafted jewelry, gifts of all kinds to take home (early Christmas shopping). After lunch we make the trip through the scenic highlands, on our way to beautiful Lake Atitlán. (B/L/D)

Mon 2nd: A day of relaxation and enjoying your surroundings. The botanical gardens (where you will discover over 200 varieties of roses, an orchid collection, a tropical Heliconia garden, a small English style knot garden, as well as see their many exotic birds), the swimming pool is heated, the Jacuzzi is delightful, the shop, a massage, hike the Atitlán Nature Reserve, see a butterfly area, try the zip-line at *Cables X-tremos*, take a tuk-tuk into the nearby town of

Panajachel for shopping and people watching. The day is yours to do whatever you choose. The evening brings a traditional Churasco (barbeque) and wine reception at the water's edge. Dress in any newly acquired *traje* (native wear) for this festive party. (B/L/D)

Tue 3rd: A boat trip around the lake to the Maya village of San Juan La Laguna to visit a weaving cooperative for demonstrations of weaving, dye techniques, and a look at the finished textiles. You will see how the Maya live here, visit an ethno-botanical garden medicinal plants and maguey (Agave or Century plant) production center. Boat to a private lakeside home for both a cultural and an ecological experience. Featured in Architectural Digest Aug 2002, this home is built in the traditional style of Maya Tz'utujil architecture. (B/L/D)

Wed 4th: Last look at this beautiful lake and gardens. Optional Kayaking trip (soft adventure). Lunch, and then depart for Guatemala City and the Hotel Vista Real. (B/L/D)

Thu 5th: Say goodbye to Guatemala and friends you have made, departure flights for home.

Included in your Explore Guatemala Tour:

- A superbly crafted travel experience to the most enchanting, magical land of the Maya...Guatemala.
- Travel with renowned artist Jan Ledbetter.
- 10 days, 9 nights at unique, luxury hotels with most meals included (per itinerary).
- Deluxe motor coaches and private boats viewing the most scenic and colorful venues...an artist's paradise!
- Hotel baggage handling, driver, and meal service tips, all entrance fees, and excursions included in itinerary.

NOT included:

- Airfare from your hometown to Guatemala City.
Our flexible plan allows you to:
 1. Use your Frequent Flyer miles to obtain your own tickets
 2. **Or**, purchase your tickets through your own sources
 3. **Or**, call travel coordinator Kristin of G&G Travel at 877-809-8900. Tell her you are traveling with **Explore Guatemala Group**. She will find the best airfare and arrange for you to arrive by the appointed time. She'll even arrange Frequent Flyer tickets for you.

Obviously, the sooner you make your reservation, the better the price and availability. However, **do not make airline arrangements until you have been notified by Explore Guatemala to do so.**

Prices:

- **\$2290** Plus airfare (p/p based on double occupancy)
- Single room supplement: **\$725**
- **Reservation Deposit: \$500 p/p**

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