



Guatemala's Woven Treasures

A Textile and Cultural Odyssey in the Highlands

Uncommon Textile Journeys that Change Lives



Plus An
Optional
2 Day
Extension
to the
Mayan Ruins at
Tikal

See Page 21

March 7 - 20, 2020

We listened to all your feedback and added another fun-filled day this year!

Featuring
4 Days of Hands-on
Weaving and Natural Dyeing
Workshops with Local
Women's Cooperatives!

Mayan Hands, A Fair-Trade Nonprofit Organization Founded in 1989



Mayan women love to weave, to inscribe their cloth with symbols of the earth's sacredness and their culture's unique vision of the universe. Mayan Hands is dedicated to empowering Mayan women in their quest to bring their families out of extreme poverty as they continue to live within the culture they cherish. Mayan Hands believes that when provided economic opportunity and income over time, women can build sustainable futures for themselves, their families and communities.



Mayan women are the poorest of the poor in Guatemalan society. Even though they are renowned as textile artists the world over, lack of alternatives and fierce competition forces them to sell their products at very low prices, sometimes under cost. Mayan Hands partners with more than 200 women artisans in 12 communities in the Guatemalan Highlands. Working with fair trade for 25 years has brought a sea change in the lives of the women.

In addition to offering fair wages for their work, Mayan Hands provides additional opportunities to their artisan partners, such as micro-lending, training in new skills and techniques, business and leadership development, access to health care, as well as classes in gender role awareness, domestic violence, conflict resolution, and herbal medicine. They are especially excited about Mayan Hands Education Fund which provides scholarships to the daughters of their artisan partners and school supplies to all children.

Meet Our Amazing Local Guide, Helmuth Antonio Leal España (with Rufus)



Loom Dancer Odysseys has worked with Helmuth on each of our Guatemala tours and we wouldn't even consider working with anyone else! As the Owner of Caminos del Quetzal Tours, guiding is not a job to Helmuth, it is his passion! His extensive knowledge of Guatemala: it's culture, geography, history and people is beyond impressive. Helmuth shares all of this with such humor and grace. We know that when you leave Guatemala, you will not only have fallen in love with a beautiful country, but you will have a life-long friend in Helmuth. (And he even loves our Rufus!)





Maya Traditions

was founded in 1996 to help skilled indigenous female artisans. The objective is to improve their quality of life while preserving their culture through facilitating access to a Fair-Trade global marketplace. Over the years, they have grown to include social programs in youth education, community health, and artisan development to better support the women artisans and their families. In 2007, Fundación Tradiciones Mayas became a registered

Guatemalan non-governmental organization with the goal of increasing their social programs to further impact the communities they work with.



Maya Traditions is based in Panajachel, Sololá, Guatemala and headed by several indigenous Maya women and international

volunteers. They currently work with seven indigenous rural communities throughout the western highlands of Guatemala comprised of over 120 indigenous women. They also support more than 500 indigenous Mayas through their social educational programming. This includes not only artisan development, but also community education, youth education and a community medicinal plant garden.

Maya Traditions' artisan partners practice a variety of different techniques in the creation of Maya Traditions' high-quality handmade

products. Through a combination of traditional practice with modern training, they support artisans in creating unique products rooted in the traditional culture that can reach national and international markets.



Cojolya Association of Mayan Women Weavers

Supporting Maya Artisans Since 1983



Cojolya is dedicated to the conservation of the millennial Maya tradition of backstrap loom weaving as well as the customs and traditions that surround it, not as a historical relic, but as an economically viable source of employment for their woman weavers.

Candis Krummel, an American designer, Elena Sojuel, a backstrap loom weaver, and Antonio Ramírez Sosof, a Tz'utujil Maya resident of Santiago Atitlán with a vision for improving his hometown, organized the non-profit Cojolya



Association of Maya Women Weavers in 1983. Using traditional Tz'utujil designs as a base, they innovated new patterns and wider widths of cloth than had been woven before. In 1997, Cojolya opened its first fair trade storefront in the town of Santiago Atitlán. In the intervening years, Cojolya has moved several times to expand the store, and has introduced new product lines, partnerships, and an online store as the Association continued to grow and to serve more artisans. They now market Cojolya products on four continents and are proud members of the World Fair Trade Organization since 2012.

Cojolya Association offers a way for skilled artists to make a living wage with the production of their magnificent textiles. The Association also seeks to facilitate the professional development of each of their weavers by providing free training in areas such as sewing machine skills, jaspé dyeing, business, communication, and design. Many of their artisans have either started their own small weaving businesses or have applied these skills to existing small enterprises. Their social branch also operates a sustainable cook stove project throughout the Lake Atitlán basin.





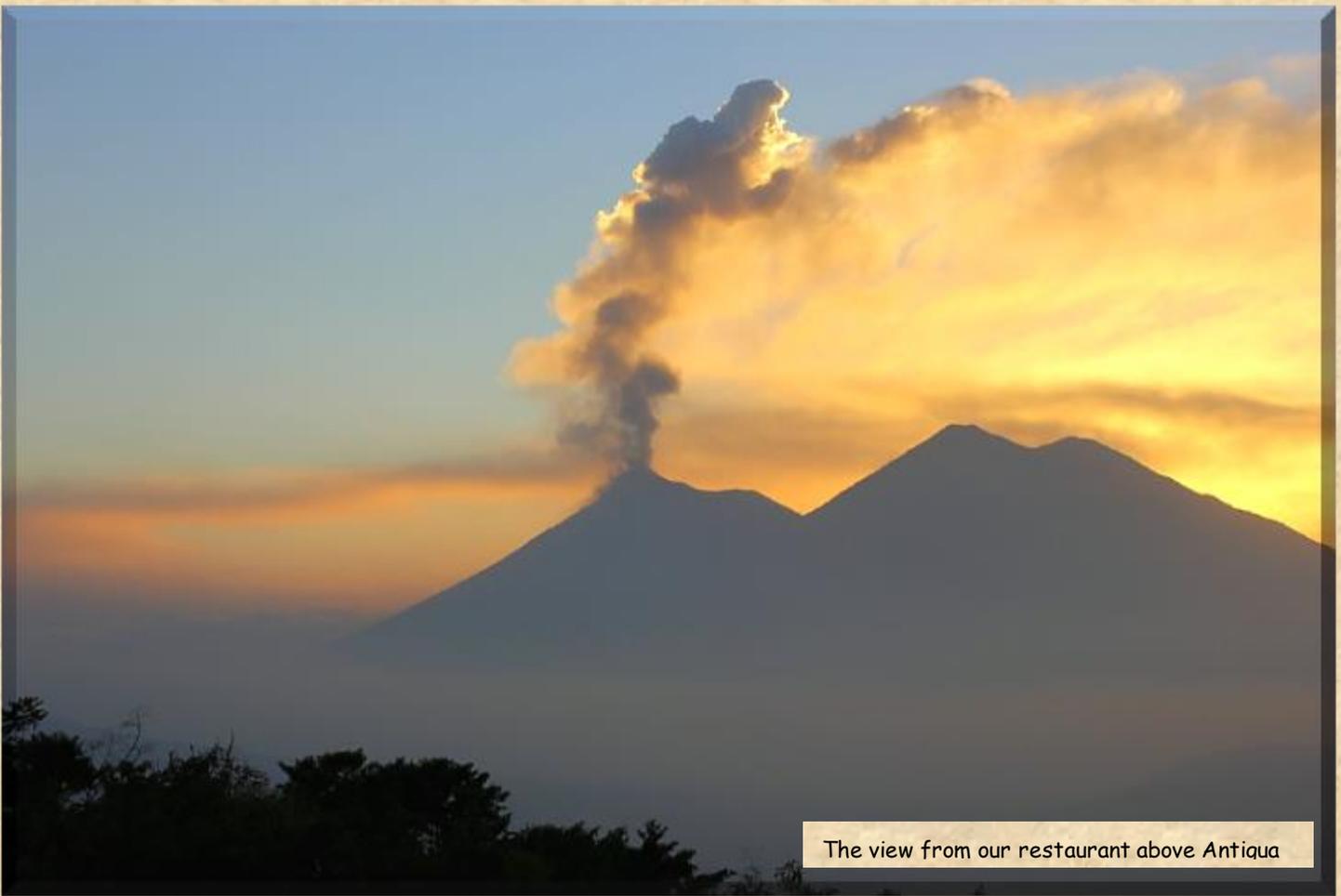
Saturday, March 7 To Antigua

Fly from your home to Guatemala. Upon arrival, you will be greeted and transferred to your hotel in enchanting colonial Antigua. We will spend three well-deserving nights in this fascinating city enjoying its many splendors. (Most flights arrive in the late evening from the US).

Our hotel is an exquisite treat where we find ourselves immersed in the romance and legends of 16th century Antigua. Palacio de Doña Leonor is a meticulously restored mansion that once served as the residence of the daughter of Spanish conqueror Don Pedro de Alvarado. Overnight at Palacio de Doña Leonor. (No meals included)

<http://www.palaciodeleonor.com>





The view from our restaurant above Antigua

Sunday, March 8

Exploring Antigua and an Amazing Procession

We enjoy a welcome breakfast this morning and set out for a guided tour of Antigua. The charming city has peaceful cobbled streets, lined by excellent examples of centuries-old colonial architecture, and surrounded by volcanoes. Houses feature wrought iron balconies and ornate entrances leading to the greenery of inner courtyards. The city's setting is equally mesmerizing with three volcanoes providing a dramatic backdrop. As

Lonely Planet puts it, Antigua is "a place of rare beauty, major historical significance and vibrant culture."



We'll visit a fascinating jade museum and factory. Jadeite Jade was discovered approximately 3,000 years ago by an early Mesoamerican culture. Their descendants, The Maya, used it as ornaments and jewelry for nobles and priests. For those that are interested, we can have lunch at a

lovely restaurant with local dancers. After our tour, the rest of the afternoon is at your leisure to explore this lovely city on your own before our evening activities.





After sunset, we have an amazing treat in store. In Antigua, corresponding to the 40 days of Lent, each Sunday there is a procession in the streets. We have timed our itinerary to coincide with the phenomenon of the Procession of Santa Inés. It seems that the entire city turns out to build carpets of flowers to line the route of the procession. We will build a carpet of our own and watch the colorful spectacle unfold before us. It is quite a cultural treat! Overnight at Palacio de Doña Leonor. (B)



Left photo:
Loom Dancer's
carpet in 2016





Monday, March 9 San Antonio Aguas Calientes and Casa del Tejido

Today we'll visit San Antonio Aguas Calientes, a tranquil village on the outskirts of Antigua known for its *Mercado de Artesanías* (Artisans Market). The town is surrounded by farmed volcanic slopes and is well known throughout Guatemala for its textiles and handicrafts. Weavers line the streets selling their creations.

We'll also visit Casa del Tejido which is a museum, market and workshop all combined in one location. We will be doing a weaving workshop with the women of Casa del Tejido when we return to Antigua. The museum boasts a collection of indigenous clothing from the various regions of Guatemala with information about the weaving and embroidery techniques used in their making, the history of the process and an explanation of the cultural significance of these textiles. Here we learn about the history of the textiles and handicrafts of Guatemala and participate in a hands-on project providing an excellent context for the rest of our adventure. We will have an opportunity to weave with the women of Casa del Tejido later in the itinerary. Overnight in Antigua at Palacio de Doña Leonor. (B)





Tuesday, March 10

Mayan Ruins of Ixmiché & Basket Weaving Co-op

This morning we travel to the ruins of Ixmiché (which means “tree of corn”). Ixmiché was once a city of 10,000 people. These ruins are the remnants of the Kaqchiquels’ 15th century capital and are made up of four large plazas consisting of distinct religious and residential areas. The palaces and temples uncovered here are modest in size but remain an important ceremonial site for indigenous pilgrims.

A highlight today will be our visit to a Mayan Hands co-operative in Xeabaj. It began over twenty years ago when a small group of widows and orphans of Guatemala's armed conflict organized to embroider products for sale and partnered with Mayan Hands. As sales dwindled, Mayan Hands brought US basket maker Michelle Hament to Guatemala to teach the women new skills. The women, skilled at stitching from the start, have developed a line of exquisite baskets.

This is no small feat as after preparing both breakfast and lunch, the women leave home three times a week at

5 am and travel 3 hours by bus and foot to the region where pine needles can be gathered. We have the opportunity to visit with these women and learn about their art and their lives.

From here, we carry on to the paradise of Lake Atitlán where we will stay for four nights. As Lonely Planet describes it: “Fisherman in rustic crafts ply the lake’s aquamarine surface, while indigenous women in multicolored outfits do their washing by the banks where trees burst into bloom. Fertile hills dot the landscape, and over everything loom the volcanoes, permeating the entire area with a mysterious beauty.”

Our boutique hotel is a paradise located right on the shores of the lake surrounded by botanical gardens filled with roses, orchids, bougainvillea and azaleas. The design and décor reflect the elegant Spanish colonial style of an 18th century Guatemalan plantation. An infinity pool gazes onto Lake Atitlán with the majestic Atitlán, Toliman and San Pedro volcanoes in the distance. Overnight at Hotel Atitlán. (B) www.hotelatitlan.com



Wednesday - Thursday, March 11 - 12
Weaving Workshop with Maya Traditions



Today we travel to the small fishing and farming village of San Juan la Laguna situated on a rise overlooking a spectacular bay on the southwest edge of Lake Atitlán. Here the Tz'utujil inhabitants are proud of their craft traditions and heritage. The women in San Juan wear *huipiles* (traditional blouses) with a design strip around the neck. This design is made up of 24 squares which represent the town's patron saint. The different colors represent the purity of blood of Tz'utujil women, nature, the sky and the water. Each of the elements is a cornerstone to the Maya culture and is prominently featured in their dress.

In this quaint setting, we will enjoy a weaving workshop with the women of Maya Traditions. We'll work alongside Mayan artisans, one-on-one in their homes, and learn not only about



backstrap weaving, but also about the artisans and their culture. The next day, the women will come to our hotel to teach which is a real treat for them. With two days of weaving, you will be able to create a small scarf or wall hanging. Overnight Hotel Atitlán. (B, L Wed)



Friday, March 13 Free Day at Lago Atitlán



Today is completely at your leisure at Lago Atitlán, famous for its natural beauty and colorful Mayan Villages. You may wish to visit some of these other hamlets around the lake by boat. Or perhaps you would like to kayak or hike around the lake. Hotel Atitlán is a paradise for birdwatchers and nature walks. The old coffee plantation contains abundant trees and plants that are habitats for a variety of birds. Suspension bridges spanning the gullies and streams offer splendid views. The taller trees are covered with moss and epiphytes (air plants), giving the impression of a cloud forest. If you look carefully, you can spot the monkeys hidden in the trees.

The nearby Butterfly Reserve features trails, a laboratory for chrysalis and pupas,

more than 2,000 plants and over 500 butterflies of the 25 species native to Guatemala. You can even zip line from mountain to mountain. Or you may opt to just relax on the grounds of our lovely hotel to enjoy a little down time. Overnight at Hotel Atitlán. (B)



Saturday, March 14

Visit to Cojolya and Ikat Dyeing Demonstration

From Panajachel, this morning we take a boat across the lake to a different village. Santiago Atitlán has the strongest indigenous identity of any of the major lake towns. In this serene village, we spend the day at the weaving cooperative of Cojolya visiting their weaving museum and participating in a hands-on workshop. The Artisans from the cooperative create bright and colorful backstrap woven textiles using ikat tying and tying and natural dyeing to produce Maya Traditions' scarves and bags.



The raw cotton is pounded with forked sticks on a bed of corn husks in order to remove plant residue, lumps, and impurities.

In the afternoon, we leave the lake and will visit Chuwila Of Queijel, Chichicastenango, one of **Maya Traditions** cooperatives high in the mountains (photos next page). The visit will offer a first-hand glimpse into the lives and work of these remarkably creative women.



Petronila begins the process of chaco, the first step after transferring the warped threads onto the loom.



Tomás, an expert in the jaspe, or ikat, dye process, ties knots on a bundle of thread to create a complex pattern.





A special welcome dance performed for us



From here, we continue to the town of Chichicastenango (known as Chichi) situated in a high mountain valley. Most of Chichi's inhabitants are pure Maya and their traditional way of life is apparent everywhere you look. Rustic and authentic, our hotel is located just steps away from the famous marketplace. Hotel Museo Mayan Inn is set around a charming interior courtyard and each room is individually decorated with colonial-style décor and dark wooden furnishings dating from the 1930's. Many include a fireplace. This location allows us to be some of the first visitors to the market tomorrow morning before the crowds descend upon the town. Overnight at Mayan Inn. (B)





Sunday, March 15

Chichicastenango Market and Quetzaltenango



Today we explore the impressive and most famous market in Guatemala, if not Central America, located right at our doorstep. The Chichicastenango market only occurs every Sunday and Thursday and is laid out in a precise, age-old system. While you may think that this market is geared to visitors to Guatemala, it is actually the central meeting place for trade among the villages of the various highland Maya. Many walk for hours lugging their wares to sell.



We'll first visit the fruit and vegetable market with its colorful sights and smells. Then we visit Iglesia de Santo Tomas (Church of Saint Tomas), built by the Dominican priests more than 450 years ago on top of an existing Maya sacred temple. The left side of the church is dedicated to the Maya god and spirits while the right side is for the Christian saints. One of the interesting features is the 18 steps leading up to the church. These represent each of the months of the Maya calendar and serve much of the same purpose as did the great flights of stairs leading to the Maya pyramids. After this visit, we explore the market once the crowds

have died down a bit (even though it might not seem that way!). Lunch is on your own.

After lunch, we'll travel to the highland city of Quetzaltenango. Familiarly known as Xela (pronounced *Shay-la*), it is the second largest in Guatemala and a major trading center for the western highlands. Mountains and volcanoes surround the city which is famous for having many of the oldest colonial buildings in the country. Our accommodations are at Pensión Bonifaz, a comfortable bed and breakfast. This colonial hotel was opened in 1935 and features a rooftop garden and bar offering panoramic views of the surrounding mountains. It even has a pool. Overnight at Pensión Bonifaz in Xela. (B)

Monday, March 16

Private Visit to Multicolores Rug Hooking Cooperative and Salcaja



After breakfast, we travel a short distance to visit **Multicolores**, a cooperative that was formed in 2014 after an interesting history. Its mission is to create economic opportunities for talented and motivated artisans with the art of rug hooking. Mary Ann Wise, an American rug hooking artist, brought this handicraft to the women of Guatemala in 2006. It was found to be compatible with the way the women's lives are organized since rug hooking is portable, equipment costs are minimal,

and recycled clothing is an inexpensive local source for hooking material. As their art evolved, they were eventually invited to exhibit their work at the Santa Fe Folk Art Market in 2014 where they were a big success. The women's unique designs, which reflect Maya culture and traditions, were appreciated and admired by market's visitors. Of the two hundred and fifty-two rugs that were taken to Santa Fe, only two were unsold. We will enjoy a private visit with the uniquely talented women of Multicolores.



Lunch is on your own in Xela. In the afternoon, we visit the small town of Salcaja which is home to the oldest Spanish church in Guatemala and famous for its *jaspé* or ikat textile weaving. We have already learned about this complex dyeing and weaving process that produces intricate abstract designs while at Lake Atitlán and now we can see more beautiful examples. This is also the village where the local Guatemalan weavers buy their supplies from a variety of vendors. Today is market day so we will have the chance to



visit these people and shops to buy wonderful local yarns, shuttles, warps and more. Salcaja is also famous for its productions of two alcoholic beverages: *caldo de frutas* which is a powerful fruit punch or sangria, and *rompopo*, which is a bit like eggnog made from rum, egg yolks, sugar and spices. We will have the opportunity to taste these unique drinks and they are also available for purchase. Overnight Pensión Bonifaz. (B)

Tuesday, March 17

Vasconcellos Cooperative and Return to Antigua

This morning we begin our drive back to Antigua (approximately three hours) with a stop en route a wonderful cooperative where they make felted animals. After lunch at a local restaurant (not included), we continue on to Antigua and Palacio de Doña Leonor, arriving in the early evening. Overnight in Antigua at Palacio de Doña Leonor. (B)



Our woven scarves on the shores of Lake Atitlan





Wednesday, March 18

Weaving Workshop with Casa del Tejido

Now that we have learned the basics of backstrap weaving, we will have the opportunity to try a more advanced technique. We travel back to San Antonio Aguas Calientes to weave for the day with the women of Casa del Tejido. We will enjoy a special lunch with our new friends, even helping to make homemade tortillas. In the late afternoon, we will return to Antigua. Overnight at Posada Doña Leonor in Antigua. (B, L)





Thursday, March 19 **Free Day in Antigua**

Today is a free day to wander around Antigua to see and do all the things you didn't have a chance to do before. You could also choose to take a day trip to Guatemala City and visit the Ixchel Museum of Indigenous Dress which focuses on textiles of Guatemala's indigenous community. Here there is an impressive array of handwoven fabrics from 120 Highland villages. (As a suggestion, you might also consider taking an extra day before or after the tour to visit this museum and stay overnight in Guatemala City. The cost of this extension is not included). Overnight at Posada Doña Leonor in Antigua. (B).

Friday, March 20 **Flights Home**

Today sadly we must say good-bye to the magic of Guatemala. But our memories will stay with us always. You transfer to the airport for your flights home. (B)

As with all true adventures, these itineraries are subject to change without notice based on a variety of factors. Although Loom Dancer Weaving Odysseys will do our best to adhere to the scheduled itinerary, we are all at the mercy of Mother Nature and varying weather conditions. As is the case with all true adventures, your itinerary should be considered an approximation of activities only. The itinerary or accommodations may be changed subject to unexpected and worthwhile opportunities, weather, group desires, and circumstances beyond our control, etc. Loom Dancer Weaving Odysseys and its guides reserve the right to alter the itinerary without prior notice. Also please be aware that any voluntary changes on your part to your itinerary while on the tour will be made at your own expense.

Land Costs Include:

- 13 Nights' Accommodations in unique and atmospheric 4 Star Hotels based on double occupancy; single accommodations available with supplement
- Exclusive, **"Behind-the-Scenes" visits to various weaving cooperatives**
- Meals as designated in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- **4 Days of Private Textile Workshops** including all materials and equipment
- All transportation (land and water); Private transfers and sightseeing tours ; Entrance Fees
- Private bilingual guided service throughout the itinerary
- Taxes
- Entrance fees

Land Costs Exclude:

- Airfare and Airport Transfers
- Any item not specifically included in your program including all snacks, extra personal beverages & bottled water, etc. other than during designated meals, alcoholic beverages
- Excess baggage fees, laundry, phone calls, internet and any other items of a personal nature not specifically indicated
- Tips for your guide, ground staff, drivers, hotel porters and other service staff
- Additional insurance of any kind

Cost: \$3,295 Per Person Based on Double Occupancy

For those wishing single accommodations, Single Supplement \$495

\$ 2,995 Special rate available for non-weavers; other activities can be arranged for them during our workshops.



LoomDancer Weaving Odysseys

does not believe in large group, bargain or "ordinary" tours. Instead, we strive to immerse the discerning and adventurous traveler into the wondrous world of global fiber arts with quality cultural encounters. Our typical group size is limited to 10-14 participants to allow for a more hands-on, intimate travel experience.

We invite you to join us;
be a creative traveler, not a tourist.



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Optional 2 Day Extension to Tikal including Air Tickets

The Magnificent Mayan Ruins of Tikal

One of the largest Maya cities ever uncovered, Tikal is a --- of ancient towering pyramids, temples and plazas. It is set in the middle of a vast jungle that is home to parrots, toucans, spider and howler monkeys and deer. There is evidence that construction dates from approximately 200 B.C through the 9th century. There is still speculation what role the city of Tikal played in the lives of the Maya, but there can be no argument about its scope. According to Frommer's Guatemala, "archeologists have mapped about 3,000 constructions, 10,000 earlier foundations beneath surviving structures, 250 stone monuments (stelae and altars), and thousands of art objects found in tombs and cached offerings."

Friday, March 20 To Tikal National Park

You will be picked up very early this morning and transfer to the airport in Guatemala City for your flight to Flores, the closest airport to the ruins. Helmuth, our Guatemalan Guide will be your personal guide for this extension. From here, you transfer to the ruins where you visit the most important sites with Helmuth for the morning. In the afternoon, you travel 45 minutes to Villa Maya. Located away from any traffic noise, loud music or other trappings of civilization, Villa Maya is nestled on a tropical estate on the edge of the Petenel and Monifata Lagoons. Here white-tailed deer and peccaries are bred on the grounds. Nature trails and bike rentals and horseback riding are just some of the services the hotel offers. Overnight at Villa Maya Tikal. (B,L)

Saturday, March 21

Lake Peten Itza / Return to Guatemala City

This morning is at your leisure to enjoy your surroundings at Villa Maya and enjoy some of the available activities. In the late afternoon, we will return to the airport for our flight back to the airport in Guatemala City. (B)

Cost: \$725 per person, double occupancy for 2-6 people; \$650 per person, double occupancy for 7-10 people
Single Supplement: \$100

Includes: Round trip air ticket; private transportation and private bilingual guide, Tikal entrance fee and lunch, 1 Night's accommodation, meals as indicated