



CENTRAL AMERICA EXPLORED, (LZCN)

San Jose to Playa del Carmen 35 Days, departing 28th November 2021



TRIP OVERVIEW

Trip Style: Overlanding

Route: San Jose to Playa del Carmen

Duration: 35 Days

Transport: US Style School Bus, Flight, Boat

Accommodation: Comfortable Hotel 13 nights
Basic Hotel 13 nights
Camping 4 nights
Multishare Hostel 3 nights

Meals: Breakfasts x 8, Lunches x 8, Dinners x 8

Physical Challenge: ● ● ○ ○ ○

Your itinerary may include easy-paced day walks, bike rides, and other activities that are not too strenuous.

Lifestyle Challenge: ● ● ● ○ ○

This trip has a bit of everything. Some areas that you travel through may be physically challenging; for example you may be at altitude some of the time and you may be camping for several nights. The pace of the trip can be tiring at times and some facilities will be basic. However there will also be plenty of time to relax and some comfortable accommodation.



DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1 - San Jose (28th November 2021)

Border information: if you are starting in San Jose, you will most likely enter Costa Rica at Juan Santamaria Airport (Code: SJO)

There will be an important group meeting at 6:00pm at the joining hotel - please look out at the hotel reception for a note from your leader with more details about this important meeting.

Until the meeting, the rest of the day is free to explore the bustling city. Please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring San Jose.

In San Jose we will stay in a comfortable hotel.

Accommodation: Don Carlos Hotel

Day 2 - Monteverde (29th November 2021)

Today we will drive to the town of Tilarán, where we will leave our overland vehicle behind and transfer by taxi to the dense cloud forests and coffee plantations of Monteverde, a stunning area offering an incredible diversity of flora and fauna.

Estimated Drive Time - 4 hours.

On the following day we will have an included guided walk on the trails of the Monteverde Cloud Forest National Reserve, followed by a free afternoon to visit some of the town's highlights or enjoy some adventurous activities such as canyoning or horse riding.

In Monteverde we will stay in a local hotel.

Day 3 - Monteverde (30th November 2021)

Today we will have an included guided walk on the trails of the Monteverde Cloud Forest National Reserve, followed by a free afternoon to visit some of the town's highlights or enjoy some adventurous activities such as canyoning or horse riding.

Day 4 - La Fortuna (1st December 2021)

Today we will head by taxi and boat to La Fortuna, a stunning town under the shadow of the mighty Arenal volcano.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4

Day 5 - La Fortuna (2nd December 2021)

Today we will have a free day to take optional treks through the incredible surrounding volcanic landscapes or forest canopies, or get involved in different adventure activities such as zip-lining, white-water rafting, and canyoning. La Fortuna is also famous for its outstanding hot springs, which we will have the opportunity to visit.

Day 6 - Isla de Ometepe (3rd December 2021)

Border information: Exit Costa Rica at Peñas Blancas, enter Nicaragua at Peñas Blancas

This morning we drive across the Nicaraguan border and to the small town of San Jorge on the shores of Lake Nicaragua, Central America's largest lake. Here we will board a ferry to the stunning volcanic island of Ometepe, where we base ourselves in the port village of Moyogalpa and enjoy free time to explore on arrival.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-6 hours.

On the following day we will have free time to explore and take part in optional activities such as the challenging trek to the summit of the Concepción volcano that dominates the island, or seeing some of the mysterious ancient petroglyphs that are dotted through the landscape.

On Ometepe we will stay in a small local hotel.

Day 7 - Isla de Ometepe (4th December 2021)

Today we will have free time to explore and take part in optional activities such as the challenging trek to the summit of the Concepción volcano that dominates the island, or seeing some of the mysterious ancient petroglyphs that are dotted through the landscape.

Day 8 - Granada (5th December 2021)

Today we will take the ferry back to San Jorge to rejoin our overland vehicle and take a short drive to Nicaragua's oldest city of Granada, a beautiful town which oozes with colonial charm! We will have free time to explore the city upon arrival.

Estimated Drive Time - 2-3 hours.

On the following day we will have free time to explore the historic streets of Granada's old town, or take part in some of the myriad of optional activities that are available here.

In Granada we will stay in a centrally-located hostel, which has a mixture of private and dormitory rooms.

Day 9 - Granada (6th December 2021)

Today we will have free time to explore the historic streets of Granada's old town, or take part in some of the myriad of optional activities that are available here.

Day 10 - Leon (7th December 2021)

Today we drive to the university town of León. En route we will have an included visit to the traditional markets in the small town of Masaya, and witness the incredible active caldera of the nearby Masaya volcano (if its volcanic activity isn't too high).

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

In León we will stay in a centrally-located hotel.

Day 11 - Lake Yojoa (8th December 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Border information: Exit Nicaragua at Las Manos, enter Honduras at Las Manos.

Today we will have a full day's drive across the border into Honduras and to the beautiful countryside of Lake Yojoa.

In Lake Yojoa we will camp for the night in the grounds of a lodge and brewery.

Estimated Drive Time - 9-11 hours.

Day 12 - Roatan (9th December 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will take a short drive to the town of San Pedro Sula and board a short local flight to Roatán, the largest of the famous tropical Bay Islands. On arrival we will transfer to the area of the West End Bay, where we base ourselves for our stay.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

On the following days we will enjoy some time to take part in the wealth of optional activities available on Roatán, and of course to relax and swim on the stunning Caribbean beaches here!

In Roatán we will stay in a local hotel near the beach.

Day 13 - Roatan (10th December 2021)

On the following days we will enjoy some time to take part in the wealth of optional activities available on Roatán, and of course to relax and swim on the stunning Caribbean beaches here!

Day 14 - Copan (11th December 2021)

Today we will start early to transfer back to Roatán's airport and catch our flight back to the mainland, rejoining our overland bus! We will then continue our journey west through Honduras, arriving at the small village of Copán.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

On the following day we will have an included guided visit to the spectacular Mayan ruins of Copán, followed by a free afternoon to explore some of the other highlights in the area.

In Copán we will stay in a local hotel.

Day 15 - Copan (12th December 2021)

Today we will have an included guided visit to the spectacular Mayan ruins of Copán, followed by a free afternoon to explore some of the other highlights in the area.

Day 16 - Suchitoto (13th December 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Border information: Exit Honduras and enter Guatemala at El Florido. Exit Guatemala and enter El Salvador at Anguiatú.

Today we will have a full day drive into Guatemala and then through to El Salvador, arriving at the beautiful town of Suchitoto.

In Suchitoto we will stay in dormitory rooms at the Centro Arte Para La Paz community centre, which runs many programs for the local communities to build cultural identity, unity, teaching skills, self-sufficiency, environmental equality and a culture of peace.

Estimated Drive Time - 8-10 hours.

On the second day we will have the chance to explore the town with its cobbled streets and whitewashed houses.

Day 17 - Suchitoto (14th December 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will have the chance to explore the town with its cobbled streets and whitewashed houses.

Day 18 - Cerro Verde NP (15th December 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will drive to the stunning Cerro Verde National Park, where we will be surrounded by awe-inspiring volcanoes and countryside. In the afternoon we will take a guided hike up the Santa Ana Volcano.

In Cerro Verde National Park we will camp with basic facilities.

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

Day 19 - Antigua (16th December 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Border information: Exit El Salvador at La Hachadura, enter Guatemala at Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado.

Today we will cross the Guatemalan border to arrive in the stunning colonial city of Antigua. The rest of the day is free to explore the beautiful colonial city and its dramatic surroundings.

In Antigua we will stay in a delightful colonial hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 6-7 hours.

Day 20 - Antigua (17th December 2021)

Free day for activities in Antigua

Day 21 - Antigua (18th December 2021)

Border information: if joining in Antigua, you will most likely enter Guatemala at Guatemala City La Aurora International Airport (IATA code: GUA).

There will be an important group meeting at 18:00 at the joining hotel - please look out at the hotel reception for a note from your leader with more details about this important meeting.

The rest of the day is free to explore the beautiful colonial city and its dramatic surroundings, and to take part in some optional activities. Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Antigua before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Antigua.

In Antigua we will stay in a delightful colonial hotel.

Day 22 - Panajachel (19th December 2021)

Today we will head off on a short drive to Panajachel, situated on the shores of the beautiful Lake Atitlan.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours (please note that all drive times given here are the approximate number of hours that the truck will be in motion only, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors - flexibility is essential on any overland trip!).

On the following day we will have free time to enjoy some optional activities such as a boat trip on the lake to some of the small villages along the shoreline. If possible, we will include a visit to the famous Chichicastenango Market during these days, depending on the weekday. *Please note that the market is only open on Thursdays and Sundays so you may not be able to visit during your trip.*

In Panajachel we will stay in a nice local hotel.

Day 23 - Panajachel (20th December 2021)

Today we will have free time to enjoy some optional activities such as a boat trip on the lake to some of the small villages along the shoreline. If possible, we will include a visit to the famous Chichicastenango Market during these days, depending on the weekday. *Please note that the market is only open on Thursdays and Sundays so you may not be able to visit during your trip.*

Day 24 - San Andres Itzapa (21st December 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Today we will drive day to San Andres Itzapa, a small village located in the mountains around Antigua. We will spend one night at the community centre of Manos Amigas, run by the Italian NGO 'Mani Amiche' in support of local women who have been abandoned and abused, and who are staying in the centre with their children.

In San Andres Itzapa we will stay in dormitories at the community centre (please note that there is no option to upgrade to private accommodation here).

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

Day 25 - Rio Dulce (22nd December 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will drive north to Rio Dulce in Guatemala's beautiful central region.

Estimated Drive Time - 7-8 hours.

In Rio Dulce we will stay in an eco-lodge.

Day 26 - Rio Dulce (23rd December 2021)

Today we have an opportunity to take a boat trip to Livingstone.

Day 27 - Poptun (24th December 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Today we have a free morning to enjoy some optional activities in Rio Dulce, before heading on a short drive to our fantastic eco-lodge near Poptún and have a free afternoon.

Day 28 - Tikal (25th December 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we have a short drive to the phenomenal Mayan ruins of Tikal, where we have an included guided tour. We will likely stop briefly in the colonial town of Flores en route.

In Tikal we will camp at a basic campsite close to the ruins.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

Day 29 - San Ignacio (26th December 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Border information: Exit Guatemala at Melchor de Mencos, enter Belize at Benque Viejo del Carmen.

Today we have a short drive across the border into Belize and on to the village of San Ignacio, home to the country's best archaeological sites and adventure activities!

Estimated Drive Time - 4-5 hours.

We will have a full day to take part in some optional activities such as trekking, caving, biking, and exploring the excellent Mayan ruins in the area.

In San Ignacio we will stay in a forest eco-lodge.

Day 30 - San Ignacio (27th December 2021)

We will have a full day to take part in some optional activities such as trekking, caving, biking, and exploring the excellent Mayan ruins in the area.

Day 31 - Caye Caulker (28th December 2021)

Today we will travel north to Belize City, where we board a speed boat to the island paradise of Caye Caulker.

Estimated Drive Time - 3-4 hours.

We will have a full day to explore and enjoy some optional activities such as snorkelling, diving or taking a scenic flight over the phenomenal Great Blue Hole.

In Caye Caulker we will stay in a local hotel.

Day 32 - Caye Caulker (29th December 2021)

We will have a full day to explore and enjoy some optional activities such as snorkelling, diving or taking a scenic flight over the phenomenal Great Blue Hole.

Day 33 - Tulum (30th December 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Border information: Exit Belize at Santa Elena, enter Mexico at Subteniente López.

Today we will head back to the mainland and rejoin our overland bus in Belize City, before continuing our drive to the stunning coastal village of Tulum.

In Tulum we will camp in a basic campsite near to the Mayan ruins.

Estimated Drive Time - 7-8 hours.

Day 34 - Playa del Carmen (31st December 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will drive to the world-famous Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza, one of the New Seven Wonders of the World - we have an included guided tour around this spectacular site before continuing our drive to Playa Del Carmen.

In Playa Del Carmen we stay in a hotel.

Estimated Drive Time - 2 hours.

Day 35 - Playa del Carmen (1st January 2022)

Today is the final day of our journey and there is no accommodation provided tonight. Please speak to your Sales representative if you would like to book additional nights of accommodation to enjoy the area.

You will most likely depart Mexico from the International airport at Cancun (IATA code: CUN) which is around 45minutes from our Hotel.

Accommodation:

ITINERARY DISCLAIMER

The routes, activities and places visited described in these notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed and it sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons; climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. Changes to the itinerary may occur with little notice so please be prepared for modifications to your trip.

Drive Times

Drive times are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. These are the approximate number of hours that the vehicle will be in motion, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors.

Accommodation and Meals Included

The type of accommodation and included meals are listed for each day of the itinerary. These listings show our intention and on most departures the listings will be accurate. However due to the flexible nature of overland itineraries, climatic, bureaucratic or road conditions may demand changes to our listed intentions or groups may simply decide to amend the plans from time to time.

Optional Activities

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Certain activities may not be available on your particular visit and it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination. It is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there. Prices listed are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. The prices are displayed according to our latest information and in the best faith, but prices do fluctuate due to exchange rates, season, numbers of participants, and simple increases from the operator, and therefore any prices listed are a guide only and cannot be guaranteed. If you partake in any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities. For more information around activity safety and insurance, please see the Essential Information document.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In the event of a real emergency once you have left your home country, please contact us on our out of office hours number. If you cannot get through on the phone, please leave a message with your name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you. Please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours, depending on the issue.

If your flight is delayed, please inform us as soon as you can and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in the Joining Point section of these notes.

Out of hours Number: +44 (0) 7985 106564

A FEW RULES

We expect all group members to act respectfully towards our staff and other group members. Bullying will not be tolerated.

Engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities, committing acts of violence or threatening violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff is not allowed. Any customer engaging in such activities will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

You must at all times comply with the laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug regulations of all countries visited and conduct yourself in accordance with our responsible travel policy. Any customer found contravening such laws or regulations will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Although we are aware that in some parts of the world taking, carrying or selling drugs, or carrying weapons may be legal, it is not acceptable for Dragoman customers and our tour leaders have the right to ask you to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price if you are found to be engaging in such activities.

ISSUES ON THE TRIP

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk.

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

IMPORTANT NOTES

OVERLANDING LIFESTYLE

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off-the-beaten-track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity.

On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc. Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out! For more details of how an overlanding trip works, please see the Essential Information document.

SAFETY STANDARDS

We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards. For more information, please see the Essential Information document

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN REMOTE AREAS

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available, and communications may be sparse. We do not carry satellite phones on our regular trips. Therefore, if you have a medical condition such as a heart condition that would put you at risk, we would suggest that this is not the trip for you. Also, please be aware that should an emergency occur, there is likely to be a considerable delay in accessing medical care, and by joining our trip you accept this risk.

VISAS, HEALTH, INSURANCE & MONEY

Before you travel there are vital things to consider such as:

- Any visas needed for your trip
- Any vaccinations needed (please consult your GP or travel clinic)
- Organising your local payment (the kitty)
- Buying travel insurance (insurance is compulsory to be allowed to join our trips)

For more information on these topics, please see the Essential Information Document.

COSTA RICA NOTES

GUATEMALA NOTES

NICARAGUA NOTES

HONDURAS NOTES

EL SALVADOR NOTES

MEXICO NOTES

BELIZE NOTES

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these notes. **These notes were printed on the 21st September 2020**