



Blue Dot Travel



\$15,990 pp

Twin-share, excluding
international flights
Solo supplement \$2,850



NICARAGUA, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA AND HONDURAS

Four countries... similar, but different. Nicaragua is the largest of the Central American countries by land size. Colonised on the Pacific coast by the Spanish and on the Atlantic coast by the British. Add an African-Caribbean influence with the indigenous peoples, and you have a melting pot of cultures. The contra war of the 1980s caused widespread poverty and casualties; however, more recently, there has been economic growth, albeit very small. The country has a growing tourism industry, and now is a good time to visit, given that tourism is in its infancy, and you can experience the genuine culture.

By contrast, El Salvador is Central America's smallest country by land size and the only country in the region without a coastline on the Atlantic/Caribbean side. It has a high population density with around 7 million inhabitants living in an area less than half the size of Tasmania. It is a very mountainous country and part of the Pacific Rim of Fire, and is subject to earthquakes. Spanish explorers became the first European visitors and went about changing the lives of indigenous Pipil Indians forever in the mid-1500s. Coffee, corn, beans and rice form its primary agricultural produce.

Honduras is a predominantly Roman Catholic country also ruled by Spain from the 16th Century. After Independence in the 1830, it was briefly annexed to Mexico, and by mid-1900s, it was ruled, ever so corruptly, by the military generals of the army. The country welcomed the US army during the Contra War of its neighbours during the 1980s and was spared most of the turbulence that the others experienced. It remains a poor country with coffee, bananas, sugar, and forestry the main exports.

There is a rich cultural heritage in Guatemala that is unlike that of the other countries of the region. Its population is over 65% indigenous Maya Indians. There is evidence of mankind from around 10,000 years BCE; however, the country is well known for being the heart of the Mayan culture, which existed from around 1,600 years ago. It too was conquered by the Spanish and annexed to Mexico in the early 1800s. Since the end of the civil war, which lasted for 36 years, up to 1996, Guatemala has remained relatively stable in a political sense and has enjoyed moderate economic growth.



Friday 5th February 2027 DEPART AUSTRALIA

Depart Australia for Guatemala City. All flights to be advised.

Day 1, Saturday 6th February ARRIVE GUATEMALA CITY

Upon your arrival at Guatemala City International Airport (GUA), a designated representative will escort you to your hotel. It's just a short ride from the airport. There's a welcome dinner planned with Guatemalan cuisine at the hotel – the Camino Real, Guatemala City (or similar), where we stay for one night. **D**



lake nestled amidst majestic volcanoes and vibrant towns, is awe-inspiring. We'll explore Santa Catarina Palopo, also known as the Blue Town, identified by a sea of brightly painted blue buildings



Day 2, Sunday 7th February LAKE ATITLAN

After breakfast, we'll drive to Lake Atitlan (a little over 3 hours). The breathtaking scenery, featuring a turquoise

adorned with geometric patterns. The town's enchanting ambience can be attributed to the dedicated efforts of Pintando el Cambio. This non-profit organisation painted over 850 buildings and homes with nuanced shades of blue, purple, and green. The organisation's meticulous approach has breathed new life into the town's architecture. Local women create beautiful textiles on traditional strap looms, dressed in rich purple headdresses. The intricate geometric patterns that adorn the buildings are a testament. Check into the Villa Santa Catarina Lake Atitlan for two nights. **B/L/D**



Day 3, Monday 8th February TOWN HOPPING IN LAKE ATITLAN

We'll start our day with an unforgettable village tour to experience the magic of Lake Atitlan, discovering hidden gems known only to the locals. The small Maya villages scattered along the shores provide an insight into Guatemala's Indigenous communities' art, history, and customs. The shores of Atitlan are home to several Indigenous Maya villages. Each



stop offers the chance to discover the local markets, shops, and cafes, where you can learn about the Maya culture and traditions firsthand. We'll visit Santiago Atitlan, a renowned destination for its artisanal crafts. The town is also home to the Weaving Centre and Museum of Cojolya. Our next stop will be at San Juan La Laguna, an indigenous community on the lake's western shore. Here, we will experience a vibrant and colourful town. The weaving cooperatives run by women are the main attraction, selling traditional textiles and artwork that make excellent souvenirs. San Juan La Laguna is a small, authentic Guatemalan community that tourists often overlook. Finally, we will visit San Marcos La Laguna, one of the prettiest villages on the lake. The community mainly consists of Maya people, who occupy the higher ground. The town boasts one of the best views of the lake's volcanoes and several excellent restaurants and coffee shops. **B/L/D**



Day 4, Tuesday 9th February

ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

Afterwards, we'll drive to Antigua and start our city tour by tasting the best coffee in the world at

a local plantation. During our visit, we will learn about coffee-making from the seed to the cup. Our walking tour of Antigua will take us to the city's lookout point, which offers breathtaking views over the city and neighbouring volcanoes and mountains. We'll check in to our hotel for one night – the Hotel Villa Colonial Antigua (or similar). Dinner is at a local restaurant. **B/D**



Day 5, Wednesday 10th February

YAXHA NATIONAL PARK

Early in the morning, we will drive for an hour to the airport to catch a domestic flight that will take us to Flores Island. Upon arrival, we'll drive about an hour and 45 minutes to visit the Mayan site Yaxha. Guatemala is home to thousands of archaeological Mayan ruins, and there are over 60,000 hidden structures that experts have yet to discover. Despite their deep location within the jungle, these ruins offer a glimpse into an incredible civilisation that existed long ago. Yaxha National Park is an example of these hidden ruins, which played a significant role in Mayan civilisation. The park boasts three astonishing archaeological complexes to explore: Yaxha, El Naranjo, and Nakum. Yaxha, located between two stunning lagoons - Yaxha and Sacnab - providing a glorious view of its towering pyramids, well-preserved buildings, and lush jungle. Then we'll drive to our hotel, where we stay for two nights, Hotel Villa Maya (or similar). **B/L/D**



Day 6, Thursday 11th February

MAYAN CITY OF TIKAL

Embrace the magic of the jungle and the ancient wonders of Tikal today. With a guide, we'll journey through lush greenery to reach Temple IV, the highest in Tikal. From this stunning viewpoint, we'll have a golden view of ancient temples and the surrounding jungle. We'll explore the vast ruins of Tikal while the sounds of the jungle engulf us, igniting a sense of wonder and inspiration. The drive is about 90 minutes each way. **B/L/D**



Day 7, Friday 12th February

RIO DULCE

We will set off early this morning on a four-hour drive to Rio Dulce. Upon arrival, we'll check in at the Nanajuana Rio Dulce (or similar) - and embark on a boat excursion that will take us through the river to the fascinating township of Livingston. The distance from Rio Dulce to Livingston is roughly 32 kilometres – roughly an hour's boat trip. Along the way, we will pass through a conservation area that boasts rainforests and diverse species. As we approach Livingston, a breathtaking sight awaits you as the river gradually narrows.

The final stretch to the Caribbean Ocean has long, steep rock walls enveloped in lush tropical vegetation. The boat ride is an incredible experience, with towering limestone walls up to 100 meters high and the canyon walls draped in tropical jungle. Livingston is a town that remains disconnected from the rest of the country due to the absence of connecting roads. Despite this, the town's rich history, enigmatic location, Garifuna culture, and delectable cuisine render it an enticing destination for visitors. With its captivating past, Livingston offers an opportunity for travellers to explore a unique culture steeped in tradition and charm. Furthermore, the town's remote location and lack of connectivity provide a sanctuary for those seeking to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life. Livingston's attraction is the town's unique cultural heritage, offbeat Caribbean vibe, and proximity to some of the most scenic and evocative destinations. After a few hours strolling around the township and stopping for a coffee, we'll head back down the river, visit Castle of San Felipe de Lara, and then return to our hotel for just one night. **B/D**



Day 8, Saturday 13th February

CASTLE OF SAN FELIPE - HONDURAS

Today, we will take a short boat ride from our hotel to Rio Dulce. Then, we'll drive to Tela, Honduras. This long but rewarding 5-hour drive includes a border crossing into Honduras. Arrive at the Lodge

and Spa, Pico Bonito (or similar), in the late afternoon, for a two-night stay. **B/D**



 **Day 9, Sunday 14th**

**February
PICO BENITO
NATIONAL PARK**

Today's adventure occurs at the Pico Bonito National Park, a couple of hours from Tela.

From Pico Bonito, you'll take a Jeep/s ride to Cangrejal River and then wade across the river to Pico Bonito National Park. El Bejucos Creek will lead us through the lush jungle to a waterfall that has formed a pool at its base. Cool off by dipping in the water and standing under the falls for a relaxing massage. Once you're thoroughly refreshed, we'll walk further into the jungle to El Bejucos Falls. This 80 metre waterfall is stunning, and the surrounding vegetation makes it feel like you're in paradise. This is the perfect time to stop and enjoy a picnic lunch. After eating, we'll return to the Jeep/s via a different path with a suspension bridge. Keep an eye out for some of the forest creatures, including toucans, frogs, monkeys, armadillos, and more. Back across the river, it's time to head to your hotel for the evening and get some well-deserved rest. **B/L/D**



**Day 10, Monday 15th February
LANCETILLA BOTANICAL GARDEN**

Today we will drive to National Park Cerro Azul Meambar where we will have a light hike. East of Lago de Yojoa, this well-maintained national park boasts kilometres of trails leading to waterfalls, caves and untouched cloud forest. The park, also known as Panacam, covers an area of 300 square kilometres. Afterwards, we'll check into the Panacam Lodge (or similar) for two nights. **B/D**



**Day 11, Tuesday 16th February
PULHAPANZAK WATERFALL AND LAKE
YOJOA**

Today, we will have a day full of adventure in the Pulhapanzak Waterfall and Lake Yojoa. Discover the lush greenery of the woods, the raw power of Pulhapanzak Waterfall, and the ancient rock formations inside the Caves of Taulabe, in contrast to the calm of Lake Yojoa. Pulhapanzak's waterfall is an impressive 43-metre (141-foot) waterfall surrounded by a lush park with places to swim in the river. The water has a powerful force coming over the cliff, creating a mist throughout the canyon. Overnight at Panacam Lodge. **B/L/D**

**Day 12, Wednesday 17th February
COPAN**

Today, we'll drive approximately 5 hours to Copan, and briefly tour the town. Copan is the cutest town

in Honduras in the northwest of the country, and it has an antique Central American vibe with its colourful houses and easy-going atmosphere. As small as it is, it is home to one of the most extraordinary Mayan Cities in the Mayan World, Copan Ruins. During the city tour, we will visit the Tea and Chocolate Place. Here, you can reconnect with nature, learn about assorted tea brews, and taste exceptional chocolate beverages. We will also visit the Macaw Mountain Reserve - a tropical bird reserve that cares for birds from the American tropics that are rescued and endangered. Stroll through the large flight aviary or relax on the decks and view the birds around you. Finally, taste a cup of some of the best organic coffee in the world. We'll check in at Hotel Marina Copan (or similar) for two nights. **B/D**



**Day 13, Thursday
18th February
COPAN RUINS**

Today is a highlight; we'll experience the inspiring world of the ancient Mayan civilisation and explore the Mayan Ruins of Copan. This UNESCO World Heritage Site, nestled in the stunning landscape of western Honduras, is a testament to the unparalleled artistic expression of the Maya people, who left behind a legacy that continues to captivate us today. Experience the grandeur of Copan through its remarkable monuments. The towering 20m-high Hieroglyphic Stairway brings to life the stories of the city's rulers and the significant events during their reigns through over 2000 glyphs. The Ball Court, a well-preserved court from that era, is a testament to the past, displaying ornamental grandeur and prominence. The Great Plaza, once a hub of social gatherings, remains a source of inspiration, with its 15 stelae representing the kings who ruled over Copan. Later, we can take time to wander around Copan township. It is a delightful hillside town with enchanting cobblestone streets and welcoming locals. **B/D**



**Day 14, Friday 19th February
COPAN TO SUCHITOTO, EL SALVADOR**

Today's itinerary includes travelling to Suchitoto, a picturesque colonial town atop a hill boasting a magnificent view of Lake Suchitlan. This place is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and architectural marvels, showcasing the town's history. After the drive from Copan, there will be some free time to explore the city independently. Check into our hotel, Hotel Los Almendros de Suchitoto (or similar), for two nights. **B/D**



Day 15, Saturday 20th February SUCHITOTO AND LAKE SUCHITLAN

Today, we'll enjoy a boat tour of Lake Suchitlan and a city tour of Suchitoto. The boat trip starts very early to capture the activities of the many wonderful bird life. Then there's a guided city tour where we can learn about the culture of the locals. Later in the afternoon, we have another opportunity to take a sunset boat tour. **B/D**



Day 16, Sunday 21st February SAN SALVADOR

Today, we'll drive to San Salvador – about 90 minutes - where we have a full-day tour of the capital and its environs, including El Boqueron, a natural park on the top of the San Salvador Volcano, the colourful colonial city of Panchimalco in the mountains of San Salvador, and the historic downtown. We'll take you to the National Craft Market to witness first-hand the incredible skill and

artistry of artisans nationwide. Once we have finished exploring the market, we'll stop at the El Rosario church (hopefully, it will be open to the public). Though its exterior may appear



simple, inside, the church has a stunning display of natural light and arches that create a rainbow effect across the altar. To truly appreciate the church's beauty, we'll visit it in the late afternoon when the lighting is most dramatic. Then, we'll drive to El Boqueron National Park, the most easily reachable volcano in El Salvador. El Boqueron is one of the two peaks of Volcano San Salvador. Watch the sunset over the city lights while relishing the delicious grilled meats and seafood at the famous restaurant Las Brumas. Check into the Hotel Barcelo San Salvador (or similar) for three nights. **B/D**



Day 17, Monday 22nd February RUTA DE LAS FLORES

El Salvador's La Ruta de las Flores - the flower route - is considered one of the most picturesque road trips in Central America. The route stretches from Sonsonate to Ahuachapan, boasting its stunning coffee fields, charming small villages adorned with flowers, bustling markets, colourful murals, and delightful shops. You'll spend a day exploring the country's western region, with stops in the charming towns of Apaneca, Ataco, and Salcoatitan. You'll see the Apaneca (Green Lagoon) and the captivating Albanian Labyrinth. When visiting Ataco, we'll see Axul Artesanía, a handicraft shop that offers a truly immersive experience. You'll witness working looms and discover unique

paintings that could easily be mistaken for high art. Accommodation at Hotel Barcelo. **B/D**



Day 18, Tuesday 23rd February JOYA DE CEREN, CERRO VERDE & LAKE COATEPEQUE

After breakfast, we will drive 1.5 hours to Joya de Ceren, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Joya de Ceren is an exceptional archaeological site, often called the 'Pompeii of the Americas' for its unique features. A volcanic eruption of the nearby Caldera Volcano buried the site around 590 AD and has been remarkably well-preserved since then.

Unlike other Mayan ruins, Joya de Ceren is a farming settlement offering a rare glimpse into the daily lives of the Mayan people. This



characteristic makes it an invaluable discovery for scholars in archaeology and history. The discovery of Joya de Ceren provides an unparalleled opportunity to explore the daily routines and habits of the Mayan people. The village is a farming settlement, not a ceremonial site, highlighting its uniqueness. We'll have lunch admiring the picturesque vista of Lake Coatepeque, protected by a collapsed volcano crater. The most striking feature of the lake lies in its breathtaking hues, which transition from deep, vibrant blues to bright turquoise, varying with the day's progression. We plan to take a 45-minute hike to Cerro Verde for those up to it. On days with clear weather conditions, this elevated vantage point offers wonderful views of the two other volcanoes, Izalco and Santa Ana, and the lake. Following our hike, we will indulge in some excellent coffee and dessert before returning to San Salvador.

Accommodation at Hotel Barcelo. **B/D**



Day 19, Wednesday 24th February TRAVEL TO LEON, NICARAGUA

Today, we'll drive to the International Airport of El Salvador (SAL) to board your flight to Nicaragua. Upon your arrival at the destination airport, a driver will escort you to the city of Leon, located in the northern reaches of Nicaragua. We will then have the remainder of the day to explore the city of Leon at leisure. The drive from the airport to our hotel is about 2 hours. Accommodation is at Hotel El Convento (or similar) for two nights. **B/D**



Day 20, Thursday 25th February LEON & CERRO NEGRO

In the morning, embark on an informative city tour of Leon, taking you to several notable locations. During this tour, we will have the opportunity to visit the roofs of the cathedral - a UNESCO heritage site - the Ortiz-Gurdian Arts Museum, the churches of

La Recolección and El Calvario, the church square located in the indigenous Subtiava neighbourhood, and the local market. After the tour, you'll have lunch in the city (own cost) before returning to your hotel for rest. Later in the afternoon, at around 3.00 pm, we will depart for Cerro Negro by 4x4. An optional climb of 350 m on foot from the entrance to reach the top. The climb takes about an hour, during which it's possible to see solfataras and the spectacular 360° view around the volcano and the whole volcanic mountain range of Los Maribios. Finally, we will witness the sunset on the plain of the Pacific. After the descent, we will have dinner consisting of a typical 'caballo bayo' in the colonial centre of Leon, followed by our second night in Leon. Accommodation at Hotel El Convento (or similar). **B/D**



Day 21, Friday 26th February LEON VIEJO & RURAL COMMUNITY

Our departure for the lost city of Leon Viejo, an esteemed UNESCO World Heritage Site near Lake Xolotlan, is scheduled for the early hours. This ancient city had been lost for centuries, with its



vital in illustrating and locating significant events in Nicaraguan history. Later, we will drive to Granada, where we will check into The Hotel Plaza Colon (in Granada), to stay for the last three nights of our adventure. **B/L/D**



Optional: Time and safety permitting, we'll drive to the Masaya Volcano National Park to ascend to the highest crater of the volcano to behold a splendid view of the volcanic complex as the sun sets behind the column of gases emanating from the crater. As night falls, we will descend to the active crater's rim to witness a mesmerising lava lake-like fountain with perpetually boiling waves. Because this is an active volcano, the government sometimes closes it due to its volcanic activity.



Day 22, Saturday 27th February OMETEPE ISLAND

To start this day, we will drive south to the port of San Jorge, where we will board a ferry to Ometepe Island, home to two awe-inspiring volcanoes - Concepcion and Maderas. These natural wonders

are a significant attraction for tourists and researchers alike, as they offer a unique opportunity to study volcanic activity and geology. The island's topography, characterised by the two towering peaks, has also significantly shaped the local culture and economy. We will be at a community of women who have organised a sustainable community tourism project called 'village-hotel'. We will visit a community and local families in the charming village of La Paloma. This clustered, rural settlement is located near Moyogalpa. It features small, lightly wooded gardens that evoke a sense of tranquillity and peacefulness. Later, we'll head back to our hotel for dinner. **B/L/D**



Day 23, Sunday 28th February GRANADA & LAS ISLETAS

Today, after breakfast, we'll take a city tour of Granada, starting with a visit to the traditional fruit and spice market within the vibrant and bustling colonial centre. A climb up the bell tower of La Merced church affords us a panoramic view of the city. We then stop at Café de la Sonrisa, enjoying a refreshing fruit smoothie - a favourite of the locals. The itinerary includes lunch at a restaurant and an afternoon of leisure to explore the city until late in the afternoon. Then, we will take a boat ride to visit the Isletas de Granada, an archipelago comprising more than 300 little islands that boast a serene paradise of water and jungle. This excursion concludes with the sunset behind the neighbouring volcano. We'll have a farewell dinner at the hotel. **B/L/D**



Day 24, Monday 1st March DEPART NICARAGUA

After breakfast, depart for our flights home – or to your next destination. Allow about an hour to transfer to the Managua International Airport (MGA) for your scheduled flight (to be confirmed). **B**



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.