

Dear Travelers,

QuinTango's next tour destination: Guatemala! We will be departing Saturday, February 4 for a 9-night, 10 day trip to experience ancient cultures, active volcanoes, colonial architecture, and tango Central American style. We will be headquartered in [Antigua](#), a photogenic sixteenth-century small town surrounded by volcanoes and one hour from Guatemala's international airport. Antigua is renowned for its Spanish colonial buildings, many of them restored following a 1773 earthquake that ended Antigua's 200-year reign as Spain's colonial capital of all of Central America. Architectural landmarks include the baroque La Merced church, noted for its ornate yellow-and-white façade, and the San Francisco Church, burial place of Guatemala's only Catholic saint, *Hermano Pedro*. There will be walking (no hard hiking), shopping, boating, tango concerts, and cultural immersion in one of the few countries left in the world with a 50% indigenous population. Everywhere you look you will want to take a photo.



We will divide the day into three parts. **Mornings** you have two options: those interested in learning or improving their Spanish will want to take advantage of Antigua's famous language instruction programs. *Coraggio!!* To get you started, QuinTango is negotiating with a local language school to provide a private tutor for EACH of you **for your first lesson** (one or two hours). Whether you are a beginner who wants to know how to greet people and order a beer, or you are advanced and need help reading the local newspaper, this is your best opportunity to learn a little Spanish. Being surrounded by Spanish will accelerate your learning – and you can practice. After the first lesson you can choose to continue or not. Tutors charge \$10/hour – so for 2 hours a morning you could do some serious improving. I hope to take advantage of this myself! If the lessons are a success you can even continue classes back home via skype. Not interested in language? You will have the mornings to linger over breakfast, wander the markets and the town, sit in cafes on the square and watch life unfold as it has for centuries. If walking is

a problem, there are always *Tuk-tuks* to carry you over the cobblestones to and from the hotel. The weather, by the way, is perfect in February – no rain and temperatures up to 78F in the afternoon and down to 58F at night.



After your morning of Spanish lessons or adventuring (including lunch on your own – many inexpensive choices and an opportunity to practice your Spanish), there will be organized **afternoon** and **evening** activities and concerts to engage your hearts and brains. The



concert dates are still under negotiation so I am leaving them off the schedule for now. Everything in bold is included in the cost.

### Itinerary

- DAY 1 - Arrive at the international airport, Guatemala City, and **transfer to hotel** in Antigua. **Opening night dinner** in a colonial courtyard.
- DAY 2 - **Guided walking tour** of [Antigua](#) to orient you historically and geographically. Dinner on your own.
- DAY 3 - **Lunch** at a spectacular mountain top art park. A panorama of volcanoes, many of which were active on our last trip. Expect fumaroles and a **talk on Guatemala's amazing geology**.
- DAY 4 - **Conversation with** [Mary Lou Ridinger](#), the woman who solved the mystery of the provenance of jade in the New World by discovering jade mines in Guatemala. Mary Lou's search for jade is featured in a recent book, *Stone of Kings* (2012). After meeting her and hearing her story, you can visit her jade factory/museum/store for some fascinating history and shopping opportunities. She is one of the great characters of Antigua. Dinner on your own.
- DAY 5 - **Adventure Day**. We are offering a range of activities – **climbing** [Pacaya Volcano](#), a volcano that has been erupting since 1965 (for the very fit); visit to Mayan village of **Santiago Zamora** to learn about local weaving, try your hand at tortilla making, and get a feel for the traditional way of life here; **coffee tour at Filadelfia Farm**, a 130-yr old coffee farm. Anyone preferring to stay in town may opt for the **chocolate museum** or a **cooking class**. **Dinner** at a casual local restaurant.
- DAY 6 - **Conversation with my friend** [Sue Patterson](#) whom many of you met in Costa Rica. Sue will offer her assessment of Guatemalan politics and healthcare in the hinterlands (she runs an NGO that serves the rural Mayan population.) Sue was the U.S. Consul General in Guatemala in the early 1990s, fell in love with the country, and upon retiring from the State Department returned to settle in Antigua. By this time you will have many questions – and Sue is just the person to ask. Her insider's view will make this trip truly memorable. **Dinner** together at one of Antigua's finer restaurants.





- DAY 7 - Today we bid beautiful Antigua goodbye and head out **with our guide** for [Lake Atitlan](#). We will stop on the way at [Iximche](#), “. . . a Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican archaeological site in the western highlands of Guatemala. *Iximche* was the capital of the Late Post classic *Kaqchikel* Maya kingdom from 1470 CE until its abandonment in 1524 CE. The architecture of the site included a number of pyramid-temples, palaces and two Mesoamerican ballcourts.

Excavators uncovered the poorly preserved remains of painted murals on some of the buildings and ample evidence of human sacrifice.” (From the Wiki article). After **lunch** we will continue to Panajachel, or “Pana” as most folks call the city. LONELY PLANET summed it up: “Several different cultures mingle on Panajachel’s dusty streets. Ladinos (people of mixed indigenous and European heritage) and gringos control the tourist industry. The *Kaqchiquel* and *Tz’utujil* Maya from surrounding villages come to sell their handicrafts to tourists. Tour groups arrive by bus for a few hours or overnight. This mix makes Pana a curiously cosmopolitan crossroads in otherwise remote, rural vicinity.” You can check it out as we drive through – and decide whether you want to venture in for a little night life later on. Meanwhile, we arrive at our destination, [Hotel Atitlan](#). I can tell you that once there I will not be leaving – gorgeous views of the volcanoes, the lake, with a beautiful pool and gardens. And a bar. In other words, serenity. Dinner tonight on your own, so those wanting to head into Pana can do so.

- DAY 8 - Today we get a taste of Mayan culture by visiting 3 villages with **a private boat and guide**. We’ll have **dinner** together at the hotel – after a refreshing dip in the pool.
- DAY 9 - This morning we head next door to the [Nature Reserve](#) where a **guide** will take us on the nature trail, hanging bridges, geodesic butterfly dome. There is an extreme zip line circuit (\$29) for the adventurous. We’ll have **lunch** and head straight to Guatemala City and the Hotel Barcelo. Farewell **dinner**.
- DAY 10 - Those returning home today will head to the airport (**shuttle provided by the Barcelo**). Those heading to *Tikal* have the option of visiting one of two museums (*Museo de Popol Vuh*, pre-Columbian collection or *Museo Ixchal*, a stunning museum featuring weavings from over 120 villages). After lunch the Tikal group heads to the airport for a **short flight to Flores**, where we will arrive just in time for a dip in the hotel pool as the sun sets. Flores is a town on an island in the Petén, that part of Guatemala that juts into Mexico. Dinner on your own.



TIKAL TRIP:

- DAY 11 - Up early so we can head out to [Tikal National Park](#). If you love ruins, you will be in your glory here – massive park with hundreds of pyramids in various states of discovery. Wild life in abundance. We booked into [Hotel Isla de Flores](#), a local hotel with Wi-Fi and highly recommended kitchen. [NOTE: Alternatively, depending on who goes and what kind of experience the group wants, we could stay at one of the three more primitive [lodges](#) near Tikal. BUT you can wander the park at dawn and dusk. We will sort that out once I know who is doing the post-trip.] Assuming we stay at Hotel Isla de Flores as planned we will return there around 3 PM and hang out that evening, maybe walking around Flores or checking out other eateries. Breakfast included, but dinner on your own. A Valentine’s Day to remember.
- DAY 12 - Up early to catch the **flight to Guatemala City**. We will transfer to the international airport, arriving by 9:30 AM. You should schedule your return flight to the States after 12 noon.

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DATES: MAIN TOUR: 4 – 13 February 2017; TIKAL TRIP: 13 – 15 February 2017.

MEALS ON MAIN TOUR: Besides **breakfast daily**, we will have **6 meals** together - 3 dinners and a lunch in Antigua, a dinner at Atitlan, and a dinner in Guatemala City. Your dinner comes with one alcoholic beverage (wine/beer). Although drinks are inexpensive here, wine is pricey, so I opted to keep the trip reasonable and offer only one glass per person.

TANGO LESSONS: We are working with Tango Antigua to arrange concerts with dancers and tango lessons. Stay tuned.

WHAT’S INCLUDED: 9 nights hotel with breakfast, meals listed above, all entrance fees, bilingual guides, all transportation for listed activities, concerts, all tips.

COST: \$2290 double occupancy (land only); \$550 single supplement  
Tikal Trip: \$475 double occupancy (includes air); single supplement TBD

NOTE: Although Costa Rica and Guatemala may seem similar because they are both in Central America, Guatemala’s colonial history and significant indigenous population make it distinctive. Yes, there are volcanoes, coffee farms, and hanging bridges – the latter probably doesn’t compare to that spectacular hanging bridge walk in CR – but there is astounding natural and architectural beauty, fascinating glimpses of age-old traditions juxtaposed with modern life, and amazing geology. Trust me! We are working to create some very special concert venues. Irwin & I are heading to Guatemala August 24 to firm up everything, so will soon have answers about the Antigua hotel (either Santo Domingo or Porta Hotel Antigua, both colonial gems) and concerts.

We are limited to 30 travelers this time – including QuinTango – so there will be fewer places than on our recent trips. If you are interested, talk to me soon.

Joan Singer  
703-548-6811