

March 17 – 26, 2008

Uncommon Journeys, LLC Guatemala Easter Week

When you enter Guatemala, you enter a magical world full of color, native crafts and captivating ethnic communities. A stroll around the churches, ruins and other architectural jewels evokes the splendor of Spanish colonial times. But that's just the beginning. The trip is scheduled to coincide with the Easter Week Processions. Although the people are Christian, the Mayan civilization left behind a deep spiritual imprint that is apparent in the processions. Throughout the week we bear witness to a wonderful confluence of Mayan and Christian traditions. For anyone interested in religious and cultural ceremonies, this trip is a must. It will leave you humbled and awed by the devotion of the Guatemalan people.

Tour Highlights

- **Easter week processions**
- **The charming colonial town of Antigua**
- **Architecture and ruins of the Spanish colonial era**
- **Traditional weaving and crafts**
- **Captivating, colorful ethnic communities**

Tour price: \$2400 Single supplement: \$550

The tour price, based on a minimum of 6 participants, **includes** 9 nights of hotel accommodations, all meals, domestic transportation, transfers, admission fees and the services of an English-speaking guide. The tour price **does not include** international airfare, beverages, tips to local guide and departure tax.

A deposit of \$500 is required to register and secure a place on the Guatemala Easter Week tour. The deposit is fully refundable if notice is given 60 days prior to departure. The balance of the tour cost is due 60 days prior to departure.

Passport Requirement

A passport with 6 months validity is required to enter Guatemala. A visa is not required for US passport holders.

Tour Leader

Debbie Jefkin-Elnekave is a travel photographer and tour leader who specializes in remote and exotic cultures. Her interests include history, architecture and landscapes, but she finds the greatest rewards in discovering, visiting and photographing indigenous cultures. Debbie's in-depth knowledge of Guatemala, profound appreciation for the people, and fluency in Spanish, ensure a very rewarding journey.

Waiver of Liability

Uncommon Journeys, LLC assumes no responsibility for accidents or injury to participants in the Guatemala Easter Week tour. You will be required to read, accept and sign an agreement which releases Uncommon Journeys, LLC from any responsibility of liability.

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Guatemala Easter Week

2008 Itinerary

Day 1: Monday, March 17 Arrive in Guatemala City

Arrive in Guatemala City.

Day 2: Tuesday, March 18 Guatemala City → Antigua

Our Guatemala City tour includes the Metropolitan Cathedral, National Palace, General Archives and a masterpiece relief map showing the topography of the country. We proceed to the charming town of Antigua, former capital of the kingdom of Guatemala. Cobblestone streets, brightly colored façades, convents, hermitages and churches harmoniously integrate into this UNESCO Heritage of Humanity site.

Day 3: Wednesday, March 19 Antigua

The early morning is best for capturing the serenity and colorful façades of Antigua. We also explore the colonial ruins, most of which were destroyed in a series of earthquakes in 1773. Our visits include La Recolectión, Las Capuchinas and Santa Clara. This afternoon we witness the first and most colorful of the processions. Hundreds of boys in purple carry a heavy litter with the revered icon of Christ holding the cross, as copal incense wafts the spiritual message up to the beloved gods. They are followed by hundreds of girls in white lace chapel veils, carrying the icon of Mary on their shoulders.

Day 4: Thursday, March 20 Antigua

This morning we observe the humble procession of proud and friendly villagers as they carry their hallowed icons through the village. We then visit to a weaving enterprise, where each exquisite creation is a work of art in itself. The Maya closely associate weaving with the symbolism of childbirth. As such, it is essential to the reproduction of their mythical universe. Back in Antigua this evening, we once again witness the traditions that lend a unique spirituality to Holy Week in Antigua. The evening procession will leave you awestruck.

Day 5: Friday, March 21 Antigua

We're out by 5:00 a.m. to photograph the elaborate flower and sawdust carpets along the processional route, which have been painstakingly crafted throughout the night. Their ephemeral presence serves as a gesture of worship to the passing icons. This morning's procession takes place at another village. The processions culminate tonight with the most dramatic. Haunting and ghostlike, hundreds of chanting men in black robes hunch under the weight of Christ's tomb. It is a powerful sight, as filled with the spirit of Holy Week as any we will witness.

Day 6: Saturday, March 22 Antigua → Chichicastenango

Depart Antigua for a stop at Iximche, founded by the Cakchiquel Maya in 1470 as a defense against the Quiche Maya. This afternoon we continue to Chichicastenango. It was here, in 1700, that friar Francisco Ximenez found the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Mayan myth of creation.

Day 7: Sunday, March 23 Chichicastenango → Quetzaltenango

Perhaps the most moving of the Holy Week celebrations is Easter Mass at Santo Tomás Church, where we bear witness to a wonderful confluence of Mayan and Christian traditions. We visit the market, then proceed to the colonial city of Quetzaltenango.

Day 8: Monday, March 24 Quetzaltenango (Zunil)

Today is resurrection day for the people of Zunil. Among other attractions, we will visit their cemetery where they visit the souls of their dearly departed loved ones.

Day 9: Tuesday, March 25 Quetzaltenango → Guatemala City

Depart the Highlands for Sololá's bi-weekly market, where local residents set up a labyrinth of stalls to display their produce, handicrafts and other wares. We make our way back to Guatemala City in time for our farewell dinner.

Day 10: Wednesday, March 26 Departure from Guatemala City.