



Guatemala

Smoking volcanoes, a deep blue lake ringed by Maya villages, jungle pyramids at Tikal, and a cobbled colonial city carpeted with flowers at Easter.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Guatemala City

POPULATION

About 18 million (2025 official projection), the largest in Central America

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Spanish. A 2003 law also recognises 21 Maya languages, Xinca and Garifuna as national languages

CURRENCY

Guatemalan quetzal (GTQ), named after the national bird

AREA

About 108,900 km²

GOVERNMENT

Presidential republic divided into 22 departments. The president is head of state and of government and is elected for a single four-year term

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Volcán Tajumulco, about 4,200 m, the highest point in Central America

LONGEST RIVER

The Motagua, about 486 km, runs east to the Gulf of Honduras. The longer Usumacinta forms part of the border with Mexico

NEIGHBOURS

Mexico to the north and west, Belize to the northeast, Honduras to the east and El Salvador to the southeast

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+502

A 45-minute trip to Guatemala

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Guatemala together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: AD 378: Siyaj K'ak' arrives at Tikal; 1871: The Liberal Revolution; 1999: The truth commission reports. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Pepián and Kak'ik. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Buenos días" (Good morning, hello), "Buenas tardes" (Good afternoon), "Buenas noches" (Good evening, good night). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/guatemala/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Guatemala and its cities



- Guatemala City (Guatemala): The National Palace of Culture and the cathedral on the central square, Zones (zonas): addresses such as '7a Avenida 1-17, Zona 4', Museums of Maya archaeology and Indigenous textiles
- Antigua Guatemala (Sacatepéquez): The yellow Santa Catalina Arch, Holy Week processions over carpets of coloured sawdust and flowers, Coffee farms on the volcano slopes
- Quetzaltenango (Quetzaltenango): The name Xela (SHEH-lah), Belle Époque buildings around the Parque Central, The Santa María and Santiaguito volcanoes nearby
- Flores (Petén): Its island setting on Lake Petén Itzá, Trips to Tikal and other Maya sites, The Mundo Maya airport, with flights from Guatemala City
- Chichicastenango (Quiché): The market on Thursdays and Sundays, The church of Santo

Tomás, where Maya prayers and incense fill the steps, Carved wooden masks and woven textiles

- Panajachel (Sololá): Views of three volcanoes across the lake, Boats to the lakeside villages, Street stalls of Maya textiles
- Cobán (Alta Verapaz): Coffee and cardamom farms, Cloud forests and orchids, The road to Lanquín and Semuc Champey
- Puerto Barrios (Izabal): The Caribbean port for bananas and other exports, Boats to Livingston, Seafood and Garifuna cooking
- Livingston (Izabal): Garifuna music, dance and language, Tapado, the coconut seafood soup, Boat trips through the Río Dulce canyon
- Huehuetenango (Huehuetenango): Highland coffee, The ruins of Zaculeu, The mountains of the Cuchumatanes
- Esquipulas (Chiquimula): The Black Christ of Esquipulas, The white baroque basilica, Pilgrims from all over Central America
- Retalhuleu (Retalhuleu): The nickname Reu, The Maya site of Tak'alik Ab'aj nearby, The Pacific coastal plain and its farms

A short history of Guatemala

Maya cities flourished in Guatemala for well over a thousand years before the Spanish arrived. Spanish rule lasted almost three centuries and left behind Antigua and a deep Catholic tradition. Since independence in 1821 the country has lived through dictators, reforms, a coup, a long civil war and, since 1996, peace and elected governments.

AD 378 **Siyaj K'ak' arrives at Tikal**

Carved monuments record that on 14 January 378 the king of Tikal died and, on the same day, a lord called Siyaj K'ak' (Fire Is Born) arrived from the west. He was probably a general linked to the great Mexican city of Teotihuacan, and a new dynasty soon ruled Tikal, which went on to become one of the most powerful Maya kingdoms.

AD 738 **Quiriguá defeats Copán**

Quiriguá, a small city on the Motagua River, had long been a vassal of Copán, just across today's border in Honduras. In 738 its king K'ak' Tiliw Chan Yopaat captured Copán's famous ruler, known as 18-Rabbit, and Quiriguá became independent. It celebrated with the tallest stone monuments the Maya ever raised.

1524 **Alvarado founds the first Spanish capital**

The conquistador Pedro de Alvarado, sent from Mexico by Hernán Cortés, led a campaign into the highlands in 1524. At first allied with the Kaqchikel Maya, he defeated their rivals the K'iche' and founded the first Spanish capital near the Kaqchikel city of Iximche. The alliance soon broke down, and resistance went on for years.

1541 **A mudflow destroys Ciudad Vieja**

The capital had been moved in 1527 to the Almolonga Valley, at today's Ciudad Vieja. On 11 September 1541 a torrent of mud and rock from the Volcán de Agua destroyed it. The capital was rebuilt nearby as Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala, the city now called Antigua.

1697 **The Spanish take Nojpetén**

Nojpetén, the island capital of the Itza Maya on Lake Petén Itzá, was the last independent Maya kingdom. Spanish forces took it by boat in 1697 and destroyed its temples. The town of Flores later grew up on the same

island.

1773 Earthquakes ruin Antigua

The Santa Marta earthquakes of 1773 badly damaged Antigua, capital of the Kingdom of Guatemala since the 1540s. The Spanish moved the capital to the Valley of the Hermitage, where the new city of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, today's Guatemala City, was founded in 1776.

1821 Independence from Spain

On 15 September 1821 leaders in Guatemala City signed the Act of Independence of Central America, ending Spanish rule. The region briefly joined the Mexican Empire and then formed the Federal Republic of Central America. 15 September is still Guatemala's Independence Day.

1847 Guatemala declares itself a republic

After the Central American federation broke apart, Guatemala declared itself an independent republic on 21 March 1847. The conservative leader Rafael Carrera, who had risen to power at the head of a peasant army, became its first president.

1871 The Liberal Revolution

In 1871 liberals led by Miguel García Granados and Justo Rufino Barrios took power. They modernised the state, reduced the power of the Church and turned coffee into the country's great export. The blue and white flag with its coat of arms, showing the quetzal bird, dates from the same year.

1944 The October Revolution

Protests and a general strike forced the dictator Jorge Ubico to resign in July 1944, and on 20 October a revolt by young officers and students overthrew his successor. The free elections that followed began ten years of reforms, later called the Ten Years of Spring, including a labour code and, in 1952, a land reform.

1954 A US-backed coup ends the revolution

The land reform angered large landowners and the powerful United Fruit Company. In June 1954 a small force trained and armed by the CIA invaded from Honduras, and President Jacobo Árbenz resigned. The reforms were reversed and a series of military-led governments followed.

1960

An officers' revolt starts the civil war

On 13 November 1960 a group of junior officers rebelled and failed. The survivors formed a guerrilla movement, and this is usually taken as the start of a civil war between the state and left-wing rebel groups that lasted 36 years.

1976

The great earthquake

At 3 in the morning on 4 February 1976 a magnitude 7.5 earthquake struck along the Motagua Fault. About 23,000 people died, most of them asleep in adobe houses, and many thousands were left homeless.

1992

Rigoberta Menchú wins the Nobel Peace Prize

Rigoberta Menchú, a K'iche' Maya woman whose family suffered during the civil war, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her work for the rights of Indigenous peoples. She was 33 years old.

1996

The peace accords are signed

After talks mediated by the United Nations, the government and the rebel alliance URNG signed the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala City on 29 December 1996. The date appears on the one-quetzal coin, next to a dove and the word Paz, peace.

1999

The truth commission reports

In February 1999 the UN-backed Commission for Historical Clarification presented its report, Memory of Silence. It estimated that more than 200,000 people were killed or disappeared during the war, found that 83 percent of the fully identified victims were Maya, and attributed 93 percent of the violations it documented to state forces and related paramilitary groups. It concluded that agents of the state had committed acts of genocide against groups of Maya people in the four regions it studied, between 1981 and 1983.

What people eat in Guatemala

Guatemalan cooking grows from Maya roots: maize, beans, chillies, tomatoes, squash and cacao, joined by Spanish meat, rice, spices and sugar. Every meal comes with warm corn tortillas, and a typical breakfast is black beans, eggs, fried plantains, fresh cheese and cream. Lunch, the main meal, is often a caldo (soup) or a recado, a thick sauce of toasted seeds, chillies and tomatoes simmered with meat and served with rice and small plain tamales. Tamales wrapped in leaves are made in hundreds of ways, and certain dishes belong to certain days: paches on Thursdays, fiambre on All Saints' Day, tamales and hot fruit punch at Christmas.

Pepián

The whole country, especially Antigua and the central highlands

Often called the national dish: a thick, rust-coloured stew of chicken or beef with potatoes, chayote and green beans. The sauce is made from pumpkin and sesame seeds, dried chillies, tomatoes and tomatillos, all toasted until dark and fragrant before being ground. It is served with rice and tortillas or small tamales.

Kak'ik

Alta and Baja Verapaz, among the Q'eqchi' Maya

A red, spicy turkey soup of pre-Hispanic origin. Turkey pieces are cooked in a broth coloured with annatto and flavoured with tomatoes, dried chillies, garlic, coriander, mint and a herb called culantro. It is served with rice and white tamales wrapped in leaves.

Tamales colorados (Tamal colorado)

The whole country

Large red tamales of soft cooked corn dough topped with a tomato and annatto sauce, a piece of chicken or pork, a strip of red pepper, an olive and sometimes a caper, then wrapped in leaves and steamed. Many families eat them on Saturday nights and above all on Christmas Eve.

Chuchitos

The whole country

Small, firm tamales of corn dough with a little meat and tomato sauce inside, wrapped in dried corn husks. They are served with a simple tomato salsa and a sprinkling of hard, salty white cheese.

Paches

Quetzaltenango and the whole country

Tamales made from mashed potato instead of corn, mixed with a tomato sauce and a piece of chicken or pork and a hot green chilli, then wrapped in leaves and steamed.

Fiambre

The whole country

A huge cold salad made only once a year for All Saints' Day on 1 November. It can contain dozens of ingredients: sausages and cold meats, chicken, pickled vegetables, baby corn, beetroot, olives, cheeses and the edible flower of the pacaya palm. It is fiambre rojo with beetroot and fiambre blanco without.

Hilachas

The whole country

Boiled beef pulled into shreds and simmered in a sauce of tomatoes, tomatillos and mild dried chillies, with potatoes and carrots. It is eaten with rice, black beans and tortillas.

Tapado

Livingston and Puerto Barrios, on the Caribbean coast

A rich seafood soup of the Garifuna people. Whole fish, crab, prawns and other shellfish are cooked in coconut milk with green plantain, tomato, onion and coriander.

Revolcado

The whole country

A thick, deep red stew of pork head and offal in a sauce of tomatoes and mild dried chillies. It is a hearty dish, often eaten with white rice and tortillas.

Cocido (Caldo de res)

The whole country

A big beef soup of colonial origin, made with beef bones and meat and plenty of vegetables: corn on the cob, cabbage, carrots, potatoes, cassava, chayote, squash and plantain. A squeeze of lime or bitter orange is added at the table, and it comes with rice, avocado and hot tortillas.

Chirmol

The whole country

The everyday Guatemalan salsa: tomatoes roasted until charred, mashed with onion, coriander, lime juice and salt, sometimes with a little chilli. It goes with grilled meat, eggs, beans and almost everything else.

Rellenitos de plátano

The whole country

Little egg-shaped balls of sweet mashed plantain filled with a mixture of black beans, chocolate and cinnamon, fried until golden and dusted with sugar. The bean filling surprises many visitors, but it tastes like a chocolate pudding.

Garbanzos en dulce (Miel de garbanzos)

The whole country

Chickpeas cooked slowly in a thick syrup of dark cane sugar and cinnamon until they turn golden and glossy. It is one of the classic Guatemalan sweets in syrup, along with mangoes and squash cooked the same way.

Atol de elote

The whole country

A warm, thick and sweet drink of fresh young corn blended with water or milk, strained and cooked with sugar and cinnamon. It is sold from big pots in markets and at street corners, especially on cool highland evenings.

Ponche de frutas

The whole country

A hot Christmas punch of chopped fruit such as pineapple, apple, papaya, prunes and raisins, simmered with cinnamon and sugar. It is drunk in December, above all with tamales on Christmas Eve.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Greet everyone when you arrive, with 'buenos días' or 'buenas tardes'. In small towns people also greet strangers politely in the street, and it is good to answer.
- Tortillas are eaten at every meal and are often served in a covered basket or cloth to keep them warm. Close the cloth again after you take one.
- Say '¡Buen provecho!' (enjoy your meal) to people who are eating when you come into or leave a room, even in a restaurant.
- It is polite to wait until everyone is served before you start eating, and to thank the cook at the end.
- In many restaurants a suggested tip (propina) of about 10 percent is already on the bill. Check before you add a tip of your own.
- Drink only bottled or purified water (agua pura), and ask for drinks without ice if you are not sure where the ice came from.

Pepián

Often called the national dish: a thick, rust-coloured stew of chicken or beef with potatoes, chayote and green beans. The sauce is made from pumpkin and sesame seeds, dried chillies, tomatoes and tomatillos, all toasted until dark and fragrant before being ground. It is served with rice and tortillas or small tamales.

Ingredients

- 1 chicken, about 1.5 kg, cut into pieces
- 3 potatoes and 1 chayote (or courgette), peeled and cut into chunks
- A handful of green beans
- 50 g hulled pumpkin seeds and 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 2 dried guajillo chillies and 1 dried pasilla chilli, seeds removed
- 4 tomatoes, 4 tomatillos, 1 onion and 2 garlic cloves
- 1 small cinnamon stick and 1 corn tortilla or slice of bread
- Salt, and fresh coriander to serve

Method

1. Put the chicken in a large pot with water to cover and a little salt, bring to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes. Keep the broth.
2. In a dry frying pan, toast the pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, chillies and cinnamon for a few minutes until fragrant, stirring so they do not burn.
3. Char the tomatoes, tomatillos, onion and garlic in the same pan until blackened in spots, then toast the tortilla until crisp.
4. Blend everything with about 500 ml of the chicken broth until smooth, and pour the sauce into the pot with the chicken.
5. Add the potatoes, chayote and green beans and simmer for 25 to 30 minutes, until the vegetables are soft and the sauce is thick. Season with salt and serve with rice, tortillas and coriander.

Hilachas

Boiled beef pulled into shreds and simmered in a sauce of tomatoes, tomatillos and mild dried chillies, with potatoes and carrots. It is eaten with rice, black beans and tortillas.

Ingredients

- 800 g beef flank or skirt steak
- 1 onion and 3 garlic cloves
- 4 tomatoes and 3 tomatillos
- 2 dried guajillo chillies, seeds removed
- 1 corn tortilla, torn into pieces
- 2 potatoes and 2 carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
- Salt, pepper and 1 tablespoon oil

Method

1. Simmer the beef with half the onion, one garlic clove and some salt in water to cover for about 1 hour 30 minutes, until very tender. Keep the broth.
2. Lift out the meat, let it cool a little and pull it into thin shreds with two forks.
3. Boil the tomatoes, tomatillos and chillies for 10 minutes, then blend them with the rest of the onion and garlic, the tortilla and 250 ml of broth until smooth.
4. Heat the oil in a wide pan, pour in the sauce and cook for 5 minutes. Add the potatoes and carrots and a little more broth, and simmer for 15 minutes.
5. Stir in the shredded beef, season with salt and pepper, and simmer for 10 more minutes until the sauce is thick. Serve with rice and tortillas.

Chirmol

The everyday Guatemalan salsa: tomatoes roasted until charred, mashed with onion, coriander, lime juice and salt, sometimes with a little chilli. It goes with grilled meat, eggs, beans and almost everything else.

Ingredients

- 4 ripe tomatoes
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- A small bunch of fresh coriander, chopped
- Juice of 1 lime
- Salt, and a little fresh green chilli if you like

Method

1. Roast the whole tomatoes in a dry frying pan or under a hot grill for about 10 minutes, turning them, until the skins are blackened in spots.
2. Let them cool a little, peel off the loose skin if you wish, and crush them in a bowl with a fork or a pestle.
3. Stir in the onion, coriander, lime juice and salt, and the chilli if using. Taste, add more salt or lime, and serve warm or at room temperature.

Rellenitos de plátano

Little egg-shaped balls of sweet mashed plantain filled with a mixture of black beans, chocolate and cinnamon, fried until golden and dusted with sugar. The bean filling surprises many visitors, but it tastes like a chocolate pudding.

Ingredients

- 3 very ripe plantains, with black skins
- 1 cinnamon stick and 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 200 g smooth refried black beans
- 40 g dark chocolate, chopped
- 2 tablespoons sugar, plus sugar or honey to serve
- Oil for frying

Method

1. Cut the plantains into pieces with the skin on and boil them with the cinnamon stick for about 10 minutes, until soft. Peel and mash them into a smooth paste, then let it cool.
2. Warm the beans with the chocolate, ground cinnamon and sugar, stirring until the chocolate melts and the filling is thick. Let it cool.
3. With wet hands, flatten a small ball of plantain paste into a cup shape, add a teaspoon of filling and close the paste around it to make an egg shape.
4. Fry the rellenos in hot oil, a few at a time, for 2 to 3 minutes, turning them until golden on all sides. Drain on paper.
5. Serve warm, dusted with sugar or drizzled with honey.

Atol de elote

A warm, thick and sweet drink of fresh young corn blended with water or milk, strained and cooked with sugar and cinnamon. It is sold from big pots in markets and at street corners, especially on cool highland evenings.

Ingredients

- 4 ears of fresh sweetcorn, or 500 g frozen sweetcorn
- 750 ml milk or water, or half and half
- 3 to 4 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cinnamon stick
- A pinch of salt

Method

1. Cut the kernels from the corn cobs with a sharp knife.
2. Blend the kernels with the milk or water until very smooth, then pour through a sieve into a saucepan, pressing to get out all the liquid.
3. Add the sugar, cinnamon and salt and heat gently, stirring all the time, as it burns easily.
4. Cook for 10 to 15 minutes, still stirring, until it thickens like a thin custard. Remove the cinnamon and serve hot in cups.

Useful phrases

Buenos días

BWEH-nohs DEE-ahs · Good morning, hello

Buenas tardes

BWEH-nahs TAR-dehs · Good afternoon

Buenas noches

BWEH-nahs NOH-chehs · Good evening, good night

Mucho gusto

MOO-choh GOOS-toh · Nice to meet you

¿Cómo está?

KOH-moh ehs-TAH · How are you? (polite)

Con gusto

kohn GOOS-toh · With pleasure, you're welcome

Con permiso

kohn pehr-MEE-soh · Excuse me, may I pass?

Disculpe

dees-KOOL-peh · Excuse me, sorry

No entiendo

noh ehn-TYEHN-doh · I don't understand

¿Habla inglés?

AH-blah een-GLEHS · Do you speak English?

¿Cuánto cuesta?

KWAHN-toh KWEHS-tah · How much is it?

La cuenta, por favor

lah KWEHN-tah por fah-VOR · The bill, please

¡Buen provecho!

bwehn proh-VEH-choh · Enjoy your meal!

¿Dónde está el baño?

DOHN-deh ehs-TAH ehl BAH-nyoh · Where is the toilet?

Agua pura, por favor

AH-gwah POO-rah por fah-VOR · Purified water, please

¿Puedo tomar una foto?

PWEH-doh toh-MAR OO-nah FOH-toh · May I take a photo?

¿A qué hora sale la lancha?

ah keh OH-rah SAH-leh lah LAHN-chah · What time does the boat leave?

Que le vaya bien

keh leh VAH-yah byehn · May all go well for you

Things you might not know

1. Volcán Tajumulco, at about 4,200 m, is the highest point in Central America. Guatemala has 37 volcanoes, and Fuego, Pacaya and Santiaguito erupt often.
2. The resplendent quetzal, a bird with long shimmering green tail feathers, is the national bird. It appears on the flag and coat of arms, and it gives its name to the currency, the quetzal.
3. The coat of arms in the middle of the flag shows a quetzal, two crossed rifles, two crossed swords, a laurel wreath and a scroll with the date of independence, 15 September 1821.
4. The national flower is the monja blanca, or white nun, a rare white orchid. It has been protected by government decree since 1946 and appears on the 50-centavo coin.
5. Tikal appears in the first Star Wars film (1977) as the rebel base on the moon Yavin 4.
6. Guatemala has two Nobel Prize winners: the writer Miguel Ángel Asturias won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1967, and Rigoberta Menchú won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.
7. Guatemala's first Olympic medal was a silver won by the race walker Erick Barrondo in London in 2012. Its first Olympic gold came in Paris in 2024, when Adriana Ruano won the women's trap shooting.
8. On 1 November, in Sumpango and Santiago Sacatepéquez, people fly and display giant round kites of tissue paper and bamboo, some many metres across, near the cemeteries. UNESCO added the craft of making these kites to its intangible heritage list in 2024.
9. During Lent and Holy Week, people in Antigua and other towns make carpets of dyed sawdust, flowers and pine needles on the streets, only for the processions to walk over them. Holy Week in Guatemala has been on UNESCO's intangible heritage list since 2022.
10. Guatemala is one of the world's biggest growers of cardamom, the spice brought by German coffee planters before the First World War. About 70 percent of it grows in Alta Verapaz.
11. Addresses in Guatemala City are made of avenue, street and zone: '7a

Avenida 1-17, Zona 4' means a building on 7th Avenue, 17 m from the corner of 1st Street, in Zone 4.

12. At the 2018 census about 44 percent of Guatemalans identified as Indigenous, most of them Maya, one of the highest shares in the Americas. The largest Maya peoples are the K'iche', Q'eqchi', Kaqchikel and Mam.
13. The Maya Biosphere Reserve in Petén covers about 21,600 km², about one fifth of the whole country, and protects forests, lakes and hundreds of ancient sites.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Guatemala, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Pepián or Kak'ik? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The peace accords are signed (1996). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The truth commission reports (1999). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Tikal National Park, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Guatemala, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Guatemala?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. In Guatemala, a "camioneta" is usually a small boat.

- A) True
- B) False

2. Which prize did the K'iche' Maya activist Rigoberta Menchú receive in 1992?

- A) An Olympic gold medal
- B) The Nobel Prize in Literature
- C) The Pulitzer Prize
- D) The Nobel Peace Prize

3. Tapado, a coconut milk soup of fish and shellfish from Livingston, is a dish of which people?

- A) The Mam
- B) The Garifuna
- C) The K'iche'
- D) The Xinca

4. Which building in Guatemala City holds Kilometre Zero, the point from which road distances are measured?

- A) The National Palace of Culture
- B) The Castle of San Felipe de Lara
- C) The Basilica of Esquipulas
- D) The Church of Santo Tomás

5. Guatemala won its first Olympic gold medal at the London Games in 2012.

- A) True
- B) False

6. As of 2026, how many UNESCO World Heritage Sites does Guatemala have?

- A) 6
- B) 2
- C) 4
- D) 8

7. The capital was moved away from Antigua after a volcanic eruption in 1773.

- A) True
- B) False

8. What is the capital of Guatemala?

- A) Guatemala City
- B) Flores
- C) Antigua Guatemala
- D) Quetzaltenango

9. Which city is known by its K'iche' Maya nickname, Xela?

- A) Retalhuleu
- B) Huehuetenango
- C) Chichicastenango
- D) Quetzaltenango

10. How do you ask for the bill in a restaurant?

- A) Mucho gusto
- B) ¡Buen provecho!
- C) La cuenta, por favor
- D) Con permiso

11. In K'iche' Maya, "maltiox" means thank you.

- A) True
- B) False

12. On 1 November, the towns of Sumpango and Santiago Sacatepéquez are famous for what?

- A) Sawdust carpets
- B) Giant kites
- C) Floating lanterns
- D) Running with bulls

Quiz answers

1. False

False. A camioneta is a bus, often a brightly painted old school bus. A small motor boat is a lancha.

2. D) The Nobel Peace Prize

Rigoberta Menchú received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her work for the rights of Indigenous peoples.

3. B) The Garifuna

Tapado is a dish of the Garifuna, who live mainly in Livingston and Puerto Barrios on the Caribbean coast.

4. A) The National Palace of Culture

Kilometre Zero is in the National Palace of Culture on the central square, built from 1939 to 1943.

5. False

False. In 2012 Erick Barrondo won silver in race walking, the first Olympic medal. The first gold came in 2024, when Adriana Ruano won the women's trap shooting.

6. C) 4

Guatemala has 4: Antigua Guatemala (1979), Tikal National Park (1979), Quiriguá (1981) and Tak'alik Ab'aj (2023).

7. False

False. It was the Santa Marta earthquakes of 1773 that ruined Antigua. A volcanic mudflow had destroyed the earlier capital at Ciudad Vieja in 1541.

8. A) Guatemala City

Guatemala City is the capital and largest city. Antigua was the capital in Spanish times, until the earthquakes of 1773.

9. D) Quetzaltenango

Quetzaltenango is called Xela, short for Xelajú, 'under ten mountains'. Retalhuleu's nickname is Reu.

10. C) La cuenta, por favor

"La cuenta, por favor" means "The bill, please".

11. True

True. Maltiox (mahl-tee-OHSH) is thank you in K'iche', the most widely spoken Maya

language in Guatemala.

12. B) Giant kites

They make and fly giant kites of tissue paper and bamboo for All Saints' Day. UNESCO recognised the craft in 2024.

Guatemala visa page

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