SIDETRAKKED

Travel Planning for the 55+ Adventurer

TRIP BLUEPRINT

Highlands to the Great Lakes. Guatemala, Honduras & Nicaragua

Prepared For	Tom & Susan
Destination	Central America: Guatemala, Honduras & Nicaragua
Trip Dates	December 13, 2026 – February 2, 2027 (51 nights)
Departs Home	Sunday 13 December 2026, from Vancouver (YVR)
Duration	51 nights · 6 bases (49 in bases + 2 in transit)
Bases	Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · Antigua · Copán Ruinas · Granada · Isla de Ometepe · San Juan del Sur
Prepared	22 October 2026
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PART 1

Your trip

Contents

Start here

Welcome. This is your Central America trip, ready to book and to carry. Everything you need is in these pages, one step at a time.

DATES	13 Dec 2026 to 2 Feb 2027 · 51 nights · 6 bases
THE ROUTE	**Panajachel (Lake Atitlán)** 12 nights → **Antigua** 9 nights → **Copán Ruinas** 3 nights → **Granada** 13 nights → **Isla de Ometepe** 7 nights → **San Juan del Sur** 5 nights
BASE BY BASE	**Your trip at a glance** (p6), the whole trip in one table

The five bookings that matter most

If you book nothing else early, book these. Then book the rest of the Book now group: **Booking list** (p. 60)

☐	**Both international flights** 13 Dec out, 2 Feb home	Fares move. Watch them and book when you're satisfied with the price; **Part 4** (p52) has the range. **Booking card** (p. 63) · **Booking card** (p. 78)
☐	**Seven of the eight places to stay** 13 Dec to 28 Jan	The first five bases plus both Guatemala City airport nights, 13 Dec and 7 Jan. Book the two airport nights together and arrange the arrival pickup in the same conversation. San Juan del Sur comes last: see below. **Booking list** (p. 60)
☐	**Antigua to Copán Ruinas, across the El Florido border** 4 Jan	One of the two hardest transfers on the trip: a shared shuttle across a land border. **Booking card** (p. 68)
☐	**Copán Ruinas to Guatemala City** 7 Jan	The other hard transfer: roughly six hours, leaving your Copán hotel at 06:00. **Booking card** (p. 70)
☐	**San Juan del Sur hotel, booked last** 28 Jan to 2 Feb	Hold this one back as late as your dates allow. It is non-refundable: you pay before arrival and there is no free cancellation window. **Booking card** (p. 76)

> How the pieces fit: the booking list in **Part 6** (p60) tells you when to book each item. Each base chapter tells you what it is, why it is our recommendation, and what to watch for on the day. The booking cards tell you how to book it and what to have with you at check-in, with room to write down what you booked.

Read the whole Blueprint through once now, at your own pace. You don't need to remember the detail. Then, before each move, reread that base's chapter.

To go back after following a link: in Preview on a Mac, choose Go, then Back. In Adobe Reader, press Command and the left arrow on a Mac, or Alt and the left arrow on Windows.

How to use this Blueprint

PART	WHAT IT HOLDS	WHEN TO USE IT
Part 1, Your trip	This introduction, your preferences, and the whole trip base by base.	*Read it now.*
Part 2, The bases	One chapter per base, in travel order: getting there, where you stay, what to do and what to watch for. Nothing is booked from a chapter: each item with a booking label has a booking card in Part 6, and that is where you book it.	*Read it through once now, then reread each chapter as that stop gets close.*
Part 3, Getting there, and getting between	The flights and every move between bases.	*When you book, and the day before each move.*
Part 4, Money	What the trip costs, and where the figures can move.	*When you book.*
Part 5, While you're there	The carry card, what to do if a plan slips, and how to book tours on the spot.	*Print the carry card and keep it with your passports.*
Part 6, Your Booking Guide	The booking list, in the order to book, then a booking card for each item with room to write down what you booked.	*When you book. Take the cards with you.*
Your Prep Guide	Getting ready to travel: entry rules, health, money, packing and the pre-departure checklist.	*In the weeks before you leave.*
Your companion workbook	The same items as the booking cards, in the same trip order, for recording bookings in a spreadsheet instead of on paper.	*When you book, if you use a spreadsheet.*
Your map	A Google map you copy into your own account, and the same pins as a map file (KMZ) for offline map apps such as **Organic Maps**. The short How to Use guide that comes with this pack has the steps.	*Before you go, and on the road.*

Who's travelling: your preferences are spelled out directly

YOUR TRIP PREFERENCES, FROM THE PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE

What matters to you	How strong
A private bathroom	Must-have, in your words
A quiet room	Must-have, in your words
Air conditioning	Must-have, in your words
Walking distance to the centre and to transit	The single most important factor, ranked above which neighbourhood it is
Max one flight connection	Hard. A stated preference
Moderate, matched pace. 2-3 active days, then a slower one	Strong preference
Wildlife, nature, moderate hiking, local markets, guided cultural walks	Strong interest
Wi-Fi-first, not a data plan	Strong preference
Public transport preferred where realistic	Strong preference
Popular places in moderation. Trip leaning quieter/local over mainstream-touristy	You called this a dealbreaker. Carried as a strong preference, and where a base works against it we say so
Avoiding cold weather	You called this a dealbreaker, and you also said you are comfortable in cool climates. Carried as a strong preference, with the cool bases flagged

HOW WE CHOSE WHERE YOU STAY

> Two of the things you called dealbreakers are carried above as strong preferences. Taken literally, avoiding cool weather or avoiding popular places would each on its own have removed most of Central America's highlands and both colonial towns, which are most of this route. So we weighed them heavily instead of using them as filters, and we flag every place the trip works against them. That means three weeks of highland nights in the low teens across Panajachel and Antigua, where you need a warm layer, and five nights in San Juan del Sur, the most foreigner-oriented town on the route. Both are covered in their own chapters. Air conditioning is applied by climate: required at the three hot Nicaraguan bases, and not needed in the highlands or at Copán, where nights are cool and warmth matters more.

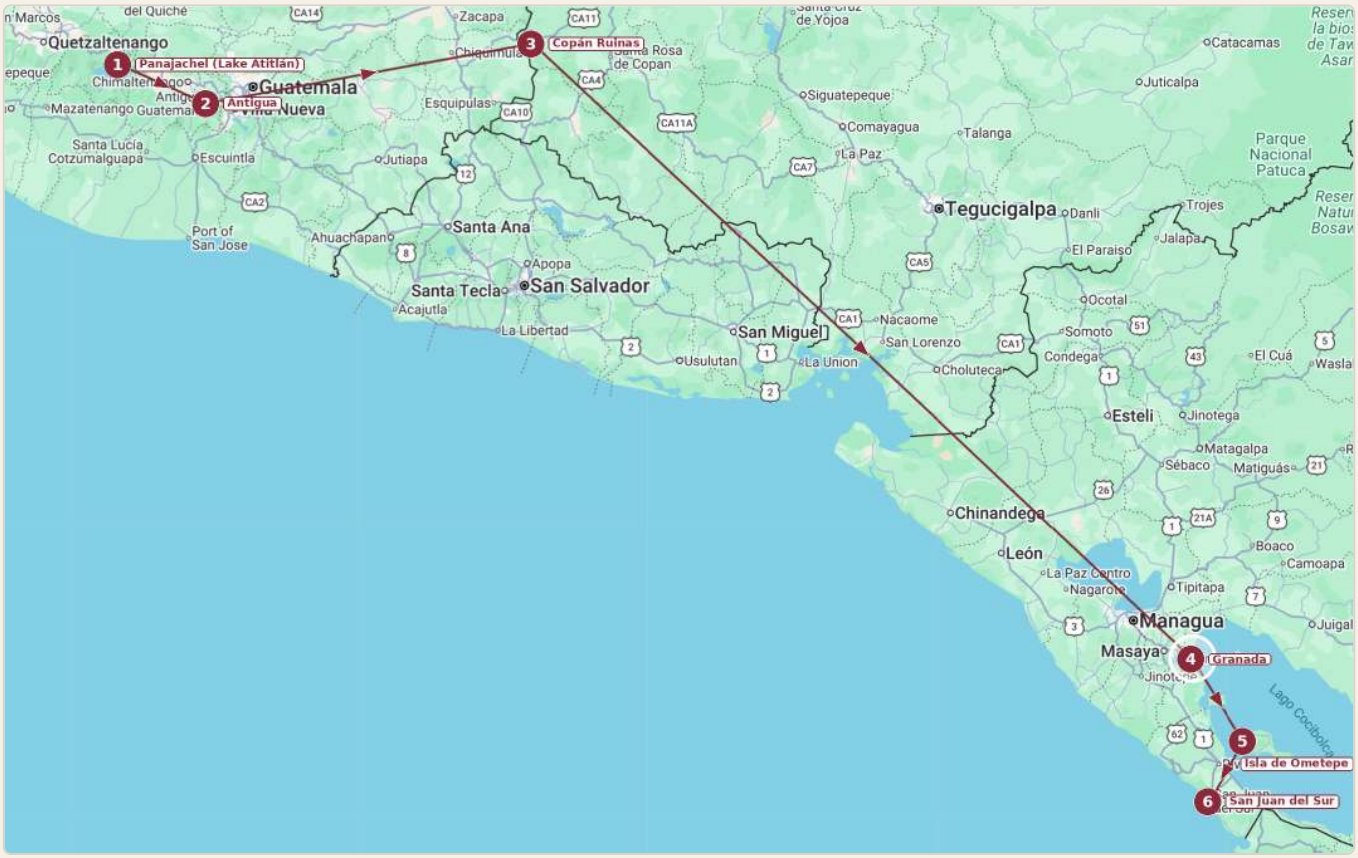
Your trip at a glance

This is Option 1 from your Trip Compass, Highlands to the Great Lakes, with Copán Ruinas in place of Flores, built out to the day with the changes the swap forced. Copán takes three nights where Flores had five, Panajachel opens the trip because the flight lands at night, and Granada absorbs the nights that frees. Forty-nine in bases, two in airport transit, fifty-one in all. Seven weeks and change, six stops, three countries: a lake ringed by volcanoes, a colonial town, a quiet ruin site near the Honduran border, a second colonial town on a second great lake, an island of two volcanoes rising out of fresh water, and a slow finish on the Pacific. The route runs from cool highlands to hot lowlands, so pack for both ends of it.

THE TRIP PLAN, BASE BY BASE

Dates	Stage	Nights	What it is
Dec 13	Depart home (YVR) → land Guatemala City 22:36; overnight beside the airport	1	**Travel day · transit night**
Dec 14	Guatemala City → transfer to Panajachel	–	**Transfer day**
Dec 14 – 25	**Panajachel (Lake Atitlán)**	12	**First base · settle in · Christmas Eve and Christmas Day kept light**
Dec 26	Panajachel → Antigua (transfer)	–	**Move day**
Dec 26 – Jan 3	**Antigua**	9	**Settled base · New Year's Eve and New Year's Day kept light**
Jan 4	Antigua → Copán Ruinas (overland via the El Florido border crossing)	–	**Move day**
Jan 4 – 6	**Copán Ruinas**	3	**Short stop**
Jan 7	Copán Ruinas → Guatemala City (shuttle; overnight near the airport ahead of the next morning's flight)	1	**Transit night**
Jan 8	Guatemala City → Granada (flight + transfer in)	–	**Travel day**
Jan 8 – 20	**Granada**	13	**Settled base**
Jan 21	Granada → Isla de Ometepe (shuttle + ferry)	–	**Move day**
Jan 21 – 27	**Isla de Ometepe**	7	**Settled base**
Jan 28	Isla de Ometepe → San Juan del Sur (transfer in)	–	**Move day**
Jan 28 – Feb 1	**San Juan del Sur**	5	**Last base · wind-down**
Feb 2	San Juan del Sur → Managua → international departure home	–	**Travel day**
Total	**51 nights, front door to front door**	**51**	**49 in bases · 2 in transit**

The whole trip, front door to front door: travel days, base stays, and move days. Detail for each leg is on its Getting to your base card in Part 2, and every booking is in Your Booking Guide in Part 6.



Your route, end to end. 1 Panajachel → 2 Antigua → 3 Copán Ruinas → 4 Granada → 5 Isla de Ometepe → 6 San Juan del Sur

Base map data ©2026 Google.

Climate. What to expect, month by month

TYPICAL CLIMATE FOR THE MONTH YOU ARE TRAVELLING, TO THE NEAREST DEGREE. SUN TIMES ARE LOCAL, MID-MONTH, OR THE MIDDLE OF YOUR STAY WHERE IT CROSSES TWO MONTHS.

Month	Base	High	Low	Sunrise	Sunset	Conditions	Packing
Dec	Panajachel	20°C	13°C	06:21	17:37	Dry season, cool and breezy at altitude; afternoon lake winds (the xocomil) most days	A warm layer for evenings and mornings. It is cold, especially before 9am
Dec–Jan	Antigua	22–23°C	12°C	06:25	17:44	Dry: 9mm all of January; clear skies	Same warm-layer note as Panajachel. Nights dip into the low teens, so warmth matters here, not A/C
Jan	Copán Ruinas	22°C	16°C	06:25	17:46	The wet outlier of the six: 13 rain days in January, 89% humidity and four hours of sun a day, whatever the dry-season label says. Valley fog most mornings	A rain layer, plus sun protection for the clear spells. Take the ruins on your first clear morning
Jan	Granada	29°C	22°C	06:08	17:38	Hot, dry, almost no rain (6mm/1 day in January); overnight lows stay high	Warm-weather clothing, sun protection. You need A/C or a strong fan here
Jan	Isla de Ometepe	~29°C	~24°C	06:06	17:38	Warm, drying out but still the tail of the wet season on the island	Sturdy footwear for uneven village lanes and trails, sun protection, rain layer as backup
Jan–Feb	San Juan del Sur	28–29°C	24°C	06:05	17:45	Warm and coastal; noticeably wetter than Granada in January despite being close by, clearing fast into February	Beach-ready, sun protection; pack a light rain layer for the first few days here

PART 2

The bases

Contents

Base 1: Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · 12 nights



A dock on Lake Atitlán, Panajachel, Guatemala



Volcanoes rising over Lake Atitlán, Panajachel



Handwoven huipiles and cortes on a highland market stall, Guatemala



Lake Atitlán at sunrise, Guatemala

Panajachel at a glance	
YOUR DATES	14 Dec to 26 Dec · 12 nights
HOW THE STAY RUNS	Arrival at the lake on Dec 14, after the overnight beside Guatemala City's airport, then two easy adjustment days before pace picks up. Two anchor / day-trip / rest cycles carry the middle of the stay, easing into two light days over Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.
WHERE YOU STAY	**Naab apart complex** · if that one is gone: **6A Cozy Cloud Studio**
GETTING HERE	**Vancouver → Guatemala City** 13 Dec **Mariana's Petit Hotel (arrival night)** 13–14 Dec **Guatemala City airport → Panajachel** 14 Dec
ON TO ANTIGUA	**Panajachel → Antigua** 26 Dec
TO BOOK FOR THIS STOP	**Vancouver → Guatemala City** BOOK NOW **Mariana's Petit Hotel (arrival night)** BOOK NOW **Guatemala City airport → Panajachel** BOOK 2 TO 4 WEEKS OUT **Naab apart complex** BOOK NOW **Reserva Natural Atitlán** NO BOOKING NEEDED **Casa Flor Ixcaco weaving co-operative** NO BOOKING NEEDED
BOOKING CARDS	**Booking cards for Panajachel** (p. 63)

Panajachel: the lake's road hub

Atitlán has twelve or fourteen lake towns around a volcanic caldera, each with its own language. For twelve nights at your pace, Panajachel is the one that works: the lake's road and shuttle hub, a 24-hour medical clinic, and a walkable main run down to the water. Most other villages are reached mainly by boat: quieter, but you are stranded once the last lancha leaves the dock at 5 or 6pm. • **Role in the trip:** your arrival base and first stop. Two easy days to recover from the flight, then a full 10 days to settle in before Antigua. • **Key facts:** altitude ~1,560m (the first of three cool highland weeks). The town sits on a caldera wall: Calle Santander and Calle del Lago are flat and walkable, but side streets climb. Two environmental facts govern every day here: the xocomil afternoon wind (roughly 1–3pm, kicks up dangerous chop on the lake) and the last public boat at 5–6pm, after which you sleep in whichever village you're standing in.

Getting to your base

Your trip starts with a long day and a late landing, so the road up to the lake waits until the morning. The first night is beside the airport in Guatemala City, and you are at Panajachel by the early afternoon of your first full day.

FLIGHT **Vancouver → Guatemala City** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 63 ›

No map pin for this one.

13 Dec

No carrier flies Vancouver to Guatemala City nonstop. The routing that works is American via Dallas, fourteen and a half hours gate to gate, one connection, landing 22:36 on the Sunday evening.

Allow at least 10 hours between landing and your onward departure. Landing is 22:36 and the road transfer to the lake is a four-and-a-half-hour journey that only makes sense in daylight, so the connection is an overnight beside the airport. Ten hours covers clearing Guatemalan immigration late at night, reaching the hotel after the free shuttle has stopped running, and breakfast before the road.

Watch out: You depart Vancouver and land in Guatemala City on the SAME DAY, SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER, at 22:36. That is too late to start a four-and-a-half-hour road journey, so your first night is beside the airport and you go up to the lake on the Monday morning. That night is booked and budgeted, and it is the first of the trip's fifty-one. Every routing that lands on the 14th instead sits you in an airport for sixteen to twenty-three hours, which is why this Blueprint does not use one. Do not book the outbound for the 14th: that lands you a day late against every accommodation booking here. Check the fare when you book. Your budget carries the MAIN CABIN fare, which includes a seat assignment and lets you add a checked bag. Main Cabin on this routing read CAD 1,492 each on 31 August, up from CAD 1,242 seventeen days earlier, a 20 per cent rise and the reason the flights line went up. American also sells a cheaper Basic Economy fare on the same aircraft, and the day's lowest all-cabin price was around CAD 1,066. If the price you are quoted looks far below the figure in Part 4, check WHICH fare you are looking at. Basic Economy boards last, assigns your seat for you, and does not let you take a checked bag, which does not suit a fifty-one night trip. If Main Cabin itself has come down, you pay less and the plan is unaffected.

WHERE YOU STAY **Mariana's Petit Hotel (arrival night)** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 63 ›

map↗ · the hotel entrance on 20 calle, zona 13, about a kilometre from the terminal

14.5786478, -90.5323538

13 Dec to 14 Dec 2026

The same family-run place in Aurora II you will use again in January, a kilometre from the terminal. The front desk is staffed around the clock for a 22:36 landing, and breakfast is from 06:30.

Watch out: The free airport shuttle runs 05:00 to 22:00 and you land at 22:36, so it will not be running when you clear customs. Arrange the pickup with the hotel when you book. Outside shuttle hours it costs US$3 a ride, about CAD 4; the risk is arriving at midnight unannounced. Do not plan to sort this out in the arrivals hall. If the hotel cannot send anyone, use the authorized taxi desk inside the arrivals hall, which is staffed for every arriving flight and is the only rank we would use at that hour. Agree the fare at the desk before you get in the car. It is a one-kilometre run, so expect a few US dollars, call it CAD 5 to CAD 10, not an airport transfer fare. Do not take an unmarked car from the curb. We could not source a published fare for that hop, so treat any number you are quoted at the desk as the fare and not as an opening offer. You stay here twice, the night you land on 13 December and the night between flights on 7 January: book both in one conversation, same hotel, same room type.

GETTING THERE **Guatemala City airport → Panajachel** BOOK 2 TO 4 WEEKS OUT · BOOKING CARD p. 64 ›

map↗ · the ground-transport meeting area at La Aurora arrivals, Guatemala City

14.5879704, -90.5306907

14 Dec

Leaving the airport hotel after breakfast means this transfer happens in full daylight with hours to spare, and you are at the lake by the early afternoon of your first full day.

Watch out: Buy a shuttle seat instead of taking the first taxi that offers. The fixed-price shuttle desks are inside the arrivals hall. The road journey takes about four and a half hours. Atitrans runs it at 06:00, 09:30 and 13:30, routed through Antigua with about an hour's stop there, which is why it takes longer than the 3 to 3.5 hours by car and driver (their own booking page, read 31 August 2026). Eat before you leave the airport; there are few road stops.

Arrival and your first 24 hours

• **Immigration:** Canadian passport holders need no visa for tourism entry to Guatemala and get a stamp on arrival. • **Connectivity:** you are using Wi-Fi instead of an eSIM, so there's no added step here.

- **Cash:** there is no transit card system at Atitlán. Lanchas and tuk-tuks are paid per leg in cash, straight to the driver, so carry small-denomination quetzales from the airport. Panajachel has the lake's widest choice of banks and ATMs, and they sit along Calle Santander.

For checking in, see the accommodation cards below.

- **Getting your bearings:** Panajachel runs downhill from the highway entrance to the lake, and Calle Santander is that line: one kilometre, pedestrian, ending at the public dock. From a Calle del Lago door the lake is one block one way and Santander one block the other. The supermarkets, the pharmacies, every ATM and most of the restaurants sit inside a five-minute walk of that junction. Walk it once and the town makes sense.

- **Your first full day:** light, and one of the two arrival-adjustment days built into the calendar before the pace picks up.

Where to stay

Book on Calle del Lago. One block back from the Santander strip, same five-minute walk to the dock, the restaurants and the bank, without the market noise. El Tzanjuyú is quieter still, but we searched Airbnb, Booking.com and Vrbo on 22 August 2026 and found nothing self-contained there for your dates, so it is not a booking target.

NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHERE IN TOWN, AND WHAT EACH ONE IS LIKE

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
Calle del Lago RECOMMENDED Terraces face the lake, not the street. Comfortable to walk back along after dark. Visitors and long-stay residents.	Flat along the water. Paved, no steps, no climb.	Lake-facing restaurants and cafes. Banks, ATMs, supermarkets and pharmacies one block over.	One block to the public dock. Tuk-tuks anywhere in town. Shuttles collect from the door. Search on Calle del Lago itself, the lakefront street one block back from Santander.	**Above average.** Furnished apartments and small hotels; lake-view stock prices well above the rest of town.
Calle Santander Vendors from 6.30am, market noise nine to nine, live music to one or two on Friday and Saturday.	Flat, fully pedestrian, one kilometre from the highway to the dock. Twenty-five minutes end to end.	Most of the town's restaurants, every ATM, the supermarkets and pharmacies, inside five minutes.	Five minutes to the dock. Tuk-tuks along its length. Every shuttle operator departs from here. Search on Calle Santander between the highway and the dock.	**Mid.** One-bedroom apartments and small hotels; the cheap end is studios above shops.
El Tzanjuyú Residential, no nightlife, lit at night, and lower foot-traffic crime than the strip. We searched Airbnb, Booking.com and Vrbo on 22 August 2026 and found no self-contained rental here for your dates, so treat this area as a place to walk, not a booking target.	Flat to gently sloped residential blocks north of Santander. Paved, well lit.	A few tiendas and comedores. Supermarkets, banks and the restaurant choice ten minutes away.	Ten minutes on foot to the dock and the strip. Tuk-tuks pick up on the street. Search around Calle Monterrey and the blocks north of Santander.	**Mid.** Houses and small gated condominium buildings, some with garage parking and a 24-hour guard.
Jucanyá Roosters, neighbours up at five, church speakers on Sunday mornings. Local, and little English spoken.	Flat, east of the Rio San Francisco bridge. Level throughout.	Tiendas and comedores. Limited selection; tourist-facing dining is back across the bridge.	Ten to fifteen minutes on foot over the bridge, or a tuk-tuk for about US$2, roughly CAD 3. Search east of the Río San Francisco bridge, around the Super 24.	**Budget.** Small houses and furnished one-bedrooms, several with a yard and parking. Lowest rates in town.

Ask which dock a listing is near. Panajachel has two, and they go to different places: Tzanjuyú, at the foot of Calle del Embarcadero, serves the north and west shore villages; the dock at the foot of Calle Rancho Grande is the Santiago crossing.

Every listing here calls itself quiet. Ask the walking distance to Calle Principal and Calle de los Arboles, which is where the clubs are.

December days here reach about 20 degrees, and nights average about 13 and can fall to 8. Check first that a place is warm enough at night; air conditioning is not needed here.

Patanatic is out. It is a steep paved road, 25 to 40 minutes uphill, and drivers refuse the run after dark.

WHERE WE WOULD BOOK, AND WHY IN THIS ORDER

Property	Neighbourhood	What it is	Roughly	Why it sits here	Where to book
Naab apart complex RECOMMENDED BOOKING CARD (p. 64) map↗ · the entrance on Callejon los Ramos, in the Playa Publica sector, flat along the water 14.7368062, -91.1588121	Calle del Lago	A handful of apartments around a courtyard, run by owners who arrange transport for guests and answer quickly.	**CAD 785** CAD 65.42 a night	The trip's longest stay, and the base where the street matters most. Almost everything Panajachel rents sits on or beside Calle Santander, where the market runs nine to nine and live music goes to one at weekends. This is on the flat lakefront instead, for about CAD 19 a night more.	Booking.com
6A Cozy Cloud Studio ALTERNATE BOOKING CARD (p. 65) map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Panajachel. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. approximate: 14.7424, -91.1495	Not resolved to one of the four areas above. The listing places it east of Calle Santander, on the third floor of a small condominium.	A bright third-floor studio in a small condominium with a shared garden and sun beds, run by a host four years in.	**CAD 554** CAD 46.17 a night	CAD 231 cheaper across the stay, with more than three times the reviews. It gives up the lakefront and the level walk home, and we could not fix which street it is on.	Airbnb

Each of the two has a booking card in Part 6, with the contact, the rate and space to write down what you reserved. We have not held dates on either.

WHERE YOU STAY **Naab apart complex** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 64 ›

map↗ · the entrance on Callejon los Ramos, in the Playa Publica sector, flat along the water
14.7368062, -91.1588121
14 Dec to 26 Dec 2026

A small apartment complex on the Playa Publica sector, flat along the water and a level walk back after dark. Your own kitchen, a terrace, and a washing machine in the building's own description.

> **Watch out:** Book the ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT by name. The same nightly price at this property also buys a Standard Double Room, a Double with Fan, and a Studio Apartment with no kitchen listed, and only the One-Bedroom lists a private kitchen. Nine guest reviews is a small sample, so read all of them. Check-in runs 15:00 to 23:00 and they ask for your arrival time in advance; checkout is by 11:00 (the property's own page, 28 Aug 2026).

> A stay of 12 nights is long enough to ask for a **weekly rate**, which is usually a real discount on the nightly price. Almost nobody applies it for you, so ask for it before you book and ask what else the host will include.

KINDS OF PLACE
Furnished one-bedroom apartments · Small independent hotels · Guesthouses and B&Bs · Whole-home rentals · Hostels

WHERE TO SEARCH
SEARCH **Airbnb** Deepest apartment inventory here.
SEARCH **Booking.com** Best for hotels and guesthouses. High-season rates here run well above the rest of the year, so hold something early on free cancellation.
SEARCH **Vrbo** About 150 properties here for your dates, and the stock skews to three-bedroom villas over one-bedroom apartments, so filter by bedrooms early. Free cancellation is common, and several listings quote an all-in total for the full twelve nights instead of a nightly rate, which makes them easy to compare.
SEARCH **Atitlán Living** Use this as a reference, not to book. It is a local directory with no rates, availability or booking, and it finds places that never reach the platforms. Take the names it gives you and look them up elsewhere.

ARRIVING BY CAR
A shuttle or taxi reaches the door everywhere except Patanatic. Santander is pedestrian, but vehicles drop at either end.

What to do

Twelve nights is long enough that you do not have to fill them. Two or three active days and then a rest day is the pattern that suits this altitude. Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are left clear.

What to do: the anchor & the must-books FULL DETAIL · BOOKING CARDS IN PART 6

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Reserva Natural Atitlán*** NO BOOKING NEEDED · BOOKING CARD p. 65 ›

CAD 14.62 per person · Shore Path ~45 min (private lake shore, 3 hanging bridges) or the shorter Coati Trail ~20 min (4 hanging bridges, a 23m waterfall). Both include suspension bridges, which matters if either of you is uneasy on them. · Open daily 08:00–17:00. At the gate you pay 80 quetzales a person, about CAD 14.62. Treat it as indicative: the reserve publishes hours on its own site but no prices (checked 31 Aug 2026), so this comes from a guide last verified in 2025 and is the least certain figure in the chapter. Carry a little more than 80 each in cash.

A private nature reserve just outside Panajachel. Hanging-bridge trails, a private lake shore, a butterfly preserve, and strong birding: 256 bird species recorded, designated an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International, the strongest birding credential anywhere on this trip.

Reserva Natural Atitlán is a private reserve a few minutes north of Panajachel, and it's the one nature morning at this base. The trails run under old shade coffee and cross the ravines on suspension bridges. Underfoot it's packed earth and stone steps, uneven in places. The Shore Path takes about 45 minutes and finishes at the reserve's own piece of lake shore, where you can sit a while and see nobody at all. Birds are the main reason to come. Go early: it's cold here before nine, but the light comes off the water then. The canopy zip-line runs at this same reserve on a separate ticket, and it is listed in the More to See and Do table below if you want it.

San Buenaventura valley, 1.5 km northwest of town, Panajachel

map↗ · The visitor centre and ticket gate at the mouth of the San Buenaventura valley, 1.5 km northwest of town

14.7510701, -91.1654989

> **Watch out:** The reserve climbs from 1,550m to 2,096m, so the top is colder than town and mornings there are cold. Bring a layer.

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Casa Flor Ixcaco weaving co-operative*** NO BOOKING NEEDED · BOOKING CARD p. 65 ›

CAD 11.88 to CAD 50.25 per person · About 1 to 1.5 hours for the weaving demonstration, longer if you stay to buy. · Mornings, while the co-operative is working and the lake crossing is at its calmest. Confirm the day locally before you travel over. Per person for a weaving demonstration. The two sources reporting this differ widely and neither says why, so agree the price when you arrange the visit.

A 34-woman Maya artisan weaving co-operative in San Juan La Laguna, growing native-colour cotton and weaving on traditional backstrap looms. The closest thing at this base to seeing how people live and work. It is a working co-operative.

San Juan La Laguna is a lancha ride across the lake, and the co-operative sits up a steep cobbled lane from the dock, so give yourself time for the climb. Inside it's a small open room with the looms set up around you and the women working while they talk. They'll show you the cotton that grows in its own colour, brown and a pale green, spun by hand and dyed with plants out of the yard. The loom ties around the weaver's waist and pulls against a post, and somebody will offer you a turn on one. Nothing here is rushed. Every finished piece carries a photo of the woman who made it.

Callejón Blanco, village centre, San Juan La Laguna

map↗ · The co-operative's shop in the centre of San Juan La Laguna

14.6935625, -91.2856875

> **Watch out:** Don't build a tight schedule around a confirmed workshop time until this is verified locally. Treat it as a flexible visit, not a fixed booking.

Eating

Where you eat in Panajachel comes down to which street you are on. Calle Santander is the tourist line: English menus, some prices quoted in US dollars, hosts who will try to pull you off the sidewalk. One block inland the same dish costs a good deal less. The local eating is in Jucanyá and Tzanjuyú and around the Mercado Municipal at the north end of Calle Real.

What you eat, if you eat where locals do, is Guatemalan highland food: pepián, kak'ik, jocón, rellenitos. The market has no menus. You sit at a long bench and the cocinera tells you what she has that day.

The neighbourhood comedores in Jucanyá and around the market run a menú del día: soup, a main, tortillas and a drink together, for about Q25 to Q40 a person, roughly CAD 4.58 to CAD 7.32. The same meal on Calle Santander costs several times that.

The timing matters more here than the choosing. Lunch is the main meal in Guatemala and it is when the good cheap food is cooked. Most comedores close by three or four in the afternoon. The lakeside restaurants stay open until ten. Eat local at midday and lakeside at night.

Getting around Panajachel & Lake Atitlán

Atitlán's transport is maritime. Public lanchas carry most of it, and Panajachel is also the lake's road and shuttle hub, which is why it's your base.

- **Don't rent a car.** Several villages you might want to visit have no real road at all, and Uber doesn't operate at the lake.
- **Last boat back:** Public lanchas stop running around 5–6pm, earlier in rainy season. Decide the return crossing before you set out.
- **Afternoon wind:** The xocomil picks up around 1–3pm most days and makes crossings rougher. Plan water-based excursions for the morning where you can.
- **Booked ahead:** The shared shuttles from the airport and on to Antigua, and the Chichicastenango day trip, are booked at https://www.atitrans.net/.
- **Everything else is cash:** There is no ride-hailing app anywhere on this lake, so every other fare is cash, agreed before you get in.

> **Public lancha**
> Village-to-village (San Juan, San Pedro, Santiago, San Marcos, Santa Cruz). Cash to the boatman on arrival, no advance booking. Two Panajachel docks: Tzanjuyú, at the foot of Calle del Embarcadero, for north/west shore villages, a separate dock at Calle Rancho Grande for Santiago. Runs roughly 06:00 to 5–6pm. Miss the last boat and you charter one or stay over.

> **Tuk-tuk**
> Around Panajachel itself, or short east-shore hops (Santa Catarina, San Antonio Palopó). Cash, agree fare before riding. Q15–35 for most local trips (~CAD 2.75–6.50).

> **Private lancha charter**
> After the last public boat, or a custom route. Cash, agree fare with the boatman. Q200–400 per boat (~CAD 37–73). Your fallback if you misjudge the last-boat timing.

Panajachel essentials at a glance

• **Local emergency:** dial 110 (police) / 122 (ambulance). Standard Guatemala numbers; confirm current at booking. • **Nearest 24-hour care:** Centro Médico San Francisco, Calle Principal de Panajachel 3-24, Zona 2 (opposite the Bomberos Voluntarios station), tel +502 7762-0352 / +502 3630-4545. A private clinic, and the nearest 24-hour option to the lake. We have not been able to source what it can and cannot handle, so treat it as first response and stabilisation, not a hospital. For anything serious the destination is Guatemala City, 3 to 3.5 hours by car and driver. Allow for that time in any emergency. Air evacuation exists in Guatemala but it is arranged commercially through your insurer, not dispatched like an ambulance, so it takes hours from the first phone call, not just flight time. Call your insurer's 24-hour line FIRST and let them route you. Confirm before you travel that your policy covers medical evacuation specifically. Evacuation, not routine treatment, is the cost risk here. • **Transit card:** none. Cash only, per leg. See Part 5 for the trip-wide version of this list.

OPTIONAL READING *More places, if you have the time and the energy.*

More to see and do

Panajachel doesn't really run on reservations, and most of what follows is walk-in. The two exceptions are marked: the Chichicastenango shuttle and the zip-line.

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Do	Village-hopping by lancha / kayaking	Playa Publica boat landing, Panajachel lakefront	A half-day exploring San Marcos, San Pedro, or San Juan by public boat, or kayaking on the lake.	map↗ · Playa Publica boat landing on the Panajachel lakefront. Exact point not confirmed. 14.7351875, -91.1589375
Tour	Chichicastenango market	Chichicastenango (day trip)	Highland Maya market, Thursdays and Sundays only. Book ahead: Atitrans round-trip shuttle from Panajachel, 08:00 departure, US$30 pp, about CAD 42	map↗ · The historic centre; the market fills the plaza in front of Santo Tomas 14.9427943, -91.111722
Do	Santa Catarina Palopó	East shore, road-accessible	Kaqchikel lakeside village 10-15 min by tuk-tuk from Panajachel; reached by road, no boat needed. Walk-in; tuk-tuk Q15-20, about CAD 2.75 to CAD 3.65	map↗ · The village lakefront at the hot springs; the plaza is a short climb inland. 14.7217967, -91.1362605
Do	San Antonio Palopó	East shore, road-accessible	Second Kaqchikel village beyond Santa Catarina, also 10-15 min by tuk-tuk and free of the lancha. Walk-in; tuk-tuk Q15-20, about CAD 2.75 to CAD 3.65	map↗ · The public lakefront landing beside the communal washing basins. 14.692376, -91.1175404
Do	Calle Santander	Panajachel	1 km pedestrian-heavy craft and vendor street running from the highway down to the public dock. Walk-in	map↗ · The street itself, running from Calle Principal down to the lakefront. Exact point not confirmed. ,
Tour	Reserva Natural Atitlán zip-line	Panajachel (Finca San Buenaventura)	Canopy zip-line at the reserve; taking it makes reserve entry free, unlike walk-in trail entry. Confirm in advance (+502 7762-2565)	map↗ · The same reserve gate; the circuits run inside the reserve 14.7510701, -91.1654989

More on this area: Guatemala's official tourism board. Destinations, archaeological sites and what's on around Lake Atitlán. Visit Guatemala (INGUAT: official)

Base 2: Antigua · 9 nights

Contents



A Maya vendor in traditional dress by the Santa Catalina Arch, Antigua



Cobblestone streets beneath Volcán de Agua, Antigua Guatemala



The ruined nave of a colonial convent, Antigua Guatemala

Antigua at a glance	
YOUR DATES	26 Dec 2026 to 4 Jan 2027 · 9 nights
HOW THE STAY RUNS	Transfer in, then a light settle-in day before the first anchor. The Pacaya volcano hike day-trip is the stay's signature outing, with a rest day after, then two light days over New Year's Eve and New Year's Day before a second anchor / day-trip / rest cycle closes the stay.
WHERE YOU STAY	**“Distrito Antigua” Apartment F** · if that one is gone: **Beautiful spacious garden apt**
GETTING HERE	**Panajachel → Antigua** 26 Dec
ON TO COPÁN RUINAS	**Antigua → Copán Ruinas (border crossing)** 4 Jan
TO BOOK FOR THIS STOP	**Panajachel → Antigua** BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY **“Distrito Antigua” Apartment F** BOOK NOW **Antigua Classic Cultural Walking Tour** BOOK NOW **Pacaya volcano day hike** BOOK NOW
BOOKING CARDS	**Booking cards for Antigua** (p. 66)

Antigua: colonial highland city

Antigua is a UNESCO World Heritage colonial city and the most visited town in Guatemala, with that traffic concentrated in a walkable 12-by-12-block core, so it is not off the beaten path. It has restaurants and cafés by the hundred, excellent coffee and food, three volcanoes visible down every straight street (Agua, Acatenango, and Fuego, which erupts more or less continuously and brings people onto the rooftops after dark), and enough infrastructure that you'll never need a car for daily life. The choice that matters here is which street you sleep on. • **Role in the trip:** your second settled base and the one with the most on the doorstep. Nine nights, the last of your three cool highland weeks, and the stay that carries you through New Year before the midpoint crossing into Honduras. • **Key facts:** elevation ~1,530m. The historic core sits on a level grid, so distance won't be the issue, but the cobblestones are badly uneven: wear sturdy footwear, nothing with a thin sole. This base spans New Year's, so expect a livelier-than-usual few days around December 31–January 1.

Getting to your base

A short move inside Guatemala with no border to clear, the easiest travel day of the trip. Take the 09:00 shuttle out of Panajachel and you are in Antigua around midday. Book it once your Antigua stay is confirmed, so the shuttle has your exact drop-off address.

GETTING THERE **Panajachel → Antigua** BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY · BOOKING CARD p. 66 ›

map↗ · collection from your own door at the Naab apart complex, Panajachel
14.7368062, -91.1588121
26 Dec

A shared shuttle from the lake down to Antigua that drops you at your booked address, not at a terminal.

> **Watch out:** Atitlán Tour runs a Panajachel to Antigua shuttle that stops at Chichicastenango's twice-weekly highland market with about 1.5 hours of free time there, on Thursdays and Sundays only. Your move is Saturday 26 December, so it is not available on this itinerary as booked. It reappears only if your dates shift onto one of those two days, and the market routing costs about CAD 61 more for the two of you than the plain shuttle. Both are set out in the cost-saving levers in Part 4. It is not worth reshuffling the trip for.

Arrival and settling in

- **Getting your bearings:** Antigua is a grid, roughly twelve blocks by twelve, laid out around Parque Central, with volcanoes closing the ends of the long straight streets. If you can see a volcano down the road, you know which way you are facing. From a Barrio de la Concepción door the plaza is a few blocks south-west, and the Santa Catalina Arch is on the way.
- **Within five minutes' walk:** almost everything, from most addresses in the core: the plaza, the cathedral, the banks and ATMs around it, more restaurants than you could work through in nine nights, and pharmacies on most blocks.
- **Money and everyday shopping:** the central market is on Alameda Santa Lucía on the western edge, about ten minutes from the plaza, with the bus terminal behind it. ATMs cluster on and around Parque Central.

Where to stay

Book in Barrio de la Concepción, on the plaza side. Quietest address still inside walking range, a few blocks north-east of Parque Central. Ask for a quiet room away from the street; here that matters more than the barrio.

NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHERE IN TOWN, AND WHAT EACH ONE IS LIKE

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
Barrio de la Concepción RECOMMENDED Named the best area for quiet, though the 6am bombas are city-wide. Couples and longer stays.	Level near Parque Central, same rounded cobbles. Climbs the further north-east you book.	Museums and ruins on its own streets. Short walk to the Arch, the market and the town centre.	A few blocks to Parque Central, where the shuttles, tuk-tuks and day-trip pickups start.	**Above average.** Colonial guesthouses and apartments at core prices. The core's quiet edge, not a cheaper alternative.
Centro Histórico Best access, worst acoustics. Marimba, roosters and fireworks are constant, and it is the most visitor-facing address.	Twelve by twelve blocks, broadly level. Rounded cobbles, uneven sidewalks, missing curb cuts, slippery in rain.	Restaurants and cafés in the hundreds, plus the central market, banks and pharmacies, all within five blocks of Parque Central.	Walk. Tuk-tuks throughout, fewer late at night. Chicken buses and the Rebulí Pullman to Guatemala City leave behind the market.	**Above average.** Restored colonial homes, boutique hotels and apartments. The highest-priced walkable stock in town.
Santa Ana Reads as a village, not a quarter of Antigua. Quieter, more local, dark by half past five.	South-eastern corner, same cobbles. Twenty minutes on foot to Parque Central each way.	Neighbourhood shops and comedores. Limited selection; restaurants and the market are the walk back in.	Twenty minutes on foot or a tuk-tuk. Gateway to the countryside trails on that side.	**Mid.** Villa-style houses and apartments with space, privacy and often a garden, which the core cannot offer.
San Felipe Quiet and residential without feeling remote. Every evening in town means a tuk-tuk back.	Residential streets north of the core, on the valley floor below Cerro de la Cruz, off the worst cobbles and without the gradient.	Tiendas and everyday shopping. Nothing tourist-facing, no restaurant choice.	Tuk-tuk to Parque Central, Q15 to Q20, about CAD 2.75 to CAD 3.65. The public hospital is here.	**Mid.** Residential houses and small gated clusters, most with a driveway, priced below the core.

Get the quiet room in writing. On the same property, a room off the street is far quieter than one facing it, and that matters more than the barrio: the 6am bombas and the church bells are city-wide.

Ask about warmth, not cooling. Nights sit near 11 degrees inside unheated stone, so ask what the room has and ask for extra bedding before you arrive, not after the first cold morning.

Jocotenango and San Bartolome Becerra are both out. The first is the loudest barrio in town; the second is up a hillside and needs a vehicle.

Your stay covers New Year's Eve, when the crowd gathers at the Municipal Palace. If you are within a few blocks of Parque Central, expect to hear it.

Please note: the stay we recommend here is NOT in the neighbourhood we recommend. Barrio de la Concepción is still the right answer on quiet. We searched Airbnb, Booking.com and Vrbo on 22 August 2026 for your exact dates and found nothing self-contained inside the barrio. Across the New Year holiday what is left there is hotels and hostels, and the one apartment within a kilometre that did clear cost almost four times what this base is budgeted for. So the area recommendation describes the town, and both places below sit in the Centro Histórico instead, each a flat walk from Parque Central. If being inside the barrio matters more to you than self-contained space, re-run that search closer to your dates: holiday inventory moves, and a hotel room there is a fair compromise to make yourselves. You are not bound to our pick. If you would rather hold the neighbourhood than the property, the table above is where to search.

WHERE WE WOULD BOOK, AND WHY IN THIS ORDER

Property	Neighbourhood	What it is	Roughly	Why it sits here	Where to book
“Distrito Antigua” Apartment F RECOMMENDED BOOKING CARD (p. 66) map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Antigua. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. approximate: 14.5544, -90.7384	Centro Histórico, western edge	One of a set of lettered apartments around a shared colonial courtyard.	**CAD 663** CAD 73.67 a night	The cheapest qualifying place in Antigua over New Year, on 167 reviews. You are here in the busiest week of the year.	Airbnb
Beautiful spacious garden apt ALTERNATE BOOKING CARD (p. 67) map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Antigua. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. approximate: 14.55359, -90.7408	Centro Histórico, on the edge of the casco	A private garden studio with its own entrance, inside a family home five blocks from Parque Central, with a large shared garden.	**CAD 909** CAD 101 a night	CAD 246 more, and the strongest review base in town at 4.87 across 186. The host gives guests the run of a laundry room, useful over nine nights. Second because you would be staying inside a family home, with a shared garden and their husky on site, and because the host declares no smoke alarm and no carbon monoxide alarm.	Airbnb

Each of the two has a booking card in Part 6, with the contact, the rate and space to write down what you reserved. We have not held dates on either.

WHERE YOU STAY **“Distrito Antigua” Apartment F** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 66 ›

map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Antigua. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door.

approximate: 14.5544, -90.7384

26 Dec to 4 Jan 2027

An entire studio apartment in a colonial courtyard building on Antigua's west side, with its own kitchen and bathroom, a few minutes' walk from Parque Central.

Watch out: This is a STUDIO, not a separate bedroom, and it is the one compromise across nine nights. It is fully self-contained and independent, which is why it is first. Nothing in Antigua at this price has heating, and January mornings here run near 11 degrees, so pack a proper layer and ask what bedding is provided.

A stay of 9 nights is long enough to ask for a **weekly rate**, which is usually a real discount on the nightly price. Almost nobody applies it for you, so ask for it before you book and ask what else the host will include.

KINDS OF PLACE	Colonial B&Bs with courtyard rooms · Boutique hotels · Furnished apartments · Whole-home and villa rentals · Hostels
WHERE TO SEARCH	SEARCH **Airbnb** Deepest apartment inventory here. SEARCH **Booking.com** Strongest for the colonial B&Bs and boutique hotels, where the quiet courtyard rooms are. Peak rates run well above the rest of the year, so book the holiday window early. **antigua-rentals.com**, down when we first checked, is back up as a small local platform (28 Aug 2026), though the best-reviewed stock for your dates sat on the big three platforms. SEARCH **Homes in Antigua** Local, and the one carrying an explicit apartment category, on (502) 7832-2775. One caution: the figures on its own pages look like monthly rents, not nightly ones, and it publishes no minimum term anywhere we could reach. Ask whether they will do nine nights before you spend time on it.
ARRIVING BY CAR	Shuttles run door to door with luggage. Parking in the core is rated a nightmare, so no car. Cobbles destroy small spinner wheels.

What to do

Nine nights, and the same two or three active days then a rest day. Do the walking tour early so the rest of the stay has a shape. New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are left light in the calendar because Antigua fills up for both.

What to do: the anchor & the must-books FULL DETAIL · BOOKING CARDS IN PART 6

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Antigua Classic Cultural Walking Tour*** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 67 ›

CAD 44.58 per person · 3 hours · Tuesday/Friday/Saturday, 09:30–12:30. On your dates that is realistically Tuesday 29 December first, then Saturday 2 January. You arrive around midday on Saturday the 26th, after the morning start, and Friday 1 January is a public holiday, so confirm that slot runs before counting on it. The operator charges 32 US dollars a person, about CAD 44.58. Paid to Antigua Tours direct.

The single best orientation to the city. City Hall Palace, the Mermaid Fountain, the Royal Palace, the San José Cathedral ruins, and the Museo del Jade, ending at the Santo Domingo museums. Largely flat, museum-focused. Suits your pace, but the cobblestones are uneven, so wear sturdy footwear.

The walking tour meets at Café Condesa on Central Park and runs three hours. A guide takes you around the old centre on foot, stopping often to explain what you're looking at: the cathedral ruins, the Mermaid Fountain, the jade workshop. It finishes inside the Santo Domingo museums, where there's somewhere to sit down. Nothing about it is far or steep, but it's all cobblestone, rounded and uneven, so wear proper shoes, not sandals. You come out of it knowing how Antigua is laid out, which makes the other eight days here easier.

Parque Central, west side, Antigua

map↗ · The operator's Park Office inside Cafe Condesa, on the west side of Parque Central

14.5567436, -90.7343175

> **Watch out:** Gentle in pace, but the route is on Antigua's rounded cobbles and uneven sidewalks, which are slippery in rain. Sturdy footwear with a thick sole, and say at the start if you would rather set the pace.

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Pacaya volcano day hike*** **BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 67 ›**

CAD 100.46 per person · About 6 to 7 hours door to door, of which roughly two are walking. · The 06:00 departure, not the afternoon one. Mornings are cooler and the volcano is far more likely to be clear. Two parts, both a person: 59 US dollars to the operator, about CAD 82.19, plus 100 quetzales at the park gate in cash, about CAD 18.27. Together about CAD 100.46 each.

The realistic volcano experience for this trip. Acatenango, the other commonly-marketed option, is an overnight, high-altitude summit trek: skip it unless your doctor and the operator both clear it for you specifically. Pacaya is much shorter, but put it to your doctor in the same conversation as Acatenango. Six to seven hours door to door, two of them walking uphill at around 2,000 to 2,500 metres.

Pacaya is a six to seven hour day out of Antigua with about two hours of actual walking in it. The path up is wide and volcanic, loose underfoot in places, and it climbs steadily the whole way without ever getting steep. The guides set a slow pace and stop often. Near the top you come out onto black lava fields, and the ground up there gives off heat you can feel through your boots. That heat is why your soles matter: thin or soft-soled shoes can suffer, and the rock is sharp enough that a fall onto it burns and cuts at once, in a place with no mountain rescue. Wear the thickest-soled boots you brought and stay on the guide's line. Look back and Agua, Fuego and Acatenango are lined up across the valley behind you, with Fuego usually puffing away. OX Expeditions rate the trail easy and that's fair for the walking, but it's still two hours of uphill in thin, dry air. Take the 06:00 departure. The afternoon one clouds over more often than not.

Meets at the OX Expeditions office, 7ma Calle Poniente #17, Antigua

map↗ · The visitor centre and ticket point at San Francisco de Sales, Escuintla, where the trail up begins. The tour meets in Antigua.

14.3994588, -90.6150846

> **Watch out:** This is an ACTIVE volcano. Global Affairs Canada states that eruptions may occur at any time, that tour operators may not meet Canadian safety standards, and that Guatemala has no mountain rescue service (**travel.gc.ca**, read 28 August 2026). If access is closed or a guide turns the group back, accept it, and do not go on a day the park is shut. Then confirm directly with the operator, in writing: any maximum-age policy, group size, turnaround/bail-out policy on the trail, and whether "taxi horse" assistance is actually available (traditionally offered on this trail, though the operator's own site does not confirm it). The cost figure covers both parts of this outing: OX Expeditions' US$59 tour price, about CAD 82, and the Q100 per person national park entrance, about CAD 18. The operator's own page states the entrance is not included in the tour; you pay it at the park gate.

Eating

Antigua's split runs by type of establishment, not by neighbourhood. The restaurants through the colonial grid and around Parque Central are visitor-facing and will hand you an English menu without being asked. Antigua holds the largest concentration of English speakers in Guatemala. The Mercado Municipal on Alameda Santa Lucía, beside the Rebulí bus terminal on the western edge, runs in Spanish and is where the cheapest and most local food is.

The dishes to look for are pepián and jocón, both Guatemalan regional specialities, with kak'ik and rellenitos close behind. The market stalls do all four. There is also a very large international scene, the largest on this trip, from the country's heaviest visitor traffic.

What is typical at lunch is the comida corrida, sometimes called the menú ejecutivo: a set two or three courses with a drink, and it is the best value meal of the day anywhere in the country.

On timing, Guatemalans eat lunch as the main meal and treat dinner as a light meal taken between seven and nine. The visitor-facing restaurants run later than that, so an evening meal is easy to find; local places keep local hours.

Getting around Antigua

No formal transit network. Antigua runs on tuk-tuks inside the grid and chicken buses to outlying areas. For a settle-in stay, walking covers almost everything. Book any cross-border or long-distance transport (to Copán) well ahead: that leg runs pre-dawn and needs 48 hours' notice on most operators.

> **Walking**
> Nearly everything inside the historic core. The core is walkable; the cobblestones, not the distances, are the limiting factor.

Tuk-tuk
Short hops, especially from Barrio de la Concepción back to the centre in the evening. Pay cash, negotiate before riding. Q15–30 per ride for most in-town trips (~CAD 2.75–5.50); less frequent late at night.

Uber
For the run between Antigua and Guatemala City or its airport. Uber does not list Antigua as one of its service cities (its own Guatemala city page, read 22 October 2026), but drivers based in the capital do take trips in and out, so try the app for that run. In town, do not count on a car on demand: use a tuk-tuk at a fare agreed first, or ask your host.

Chicken bus (camioneta)
Day trips to surrounding villages. Cash to the conductor. Colourful, loud, crowded. A local-life experience for a short hop, not recommended for anything requiring comfort or a schedule.

Car rental (don't drive here)
Don't rent a car for this base either. Cobblestones are rough on vehicles, parking in the historic core is rated a "nightmare," and there's no daily-life reason to need one.

Antigua essentials at a glance
• **Local emergency:** Guatemala has no unified 911. Dial 122 (Bomberos Voluntarios, primary medical responder), 123 (Bomberos Municipales), 110 (national police), or 1500 (PROATUR/ASISTUR, the bilingual 24-hour tourist emergency line, likely your best first call). • **Nearest hospital, 24-hour:** Hospital Privado Hermano Pedro, private, English-spoken by some doctors, recommended by the US Embassy. • **English-speaking clinic:** Vitalmed, private clinic with English-speaking doctors. • **Escalation for anything serious:** Guatemala City private hospitals, about 45 minutes by ambulance. • **Transit card:** none. Cash only for tuk-tuks and buses. PROATUR's 1500 line is the trip-wide backup for anything more serious. • **Footwear:** the cobbled streets and sidewalks, not the distances, are the limiting factor, so choose your shoes for them. Fuego, and what it actually means for you: the volcano sits 16 to 18 km southwest, with the bulk of Acatenango standing between it and the town. Antigua is outside every hazard zone CONRED maps, and has been through every recent eruption. What reaches you is fine ash on car roofs and window ledges after a strong episode, and rumbling loud enough to rattle windows. The practical exposure is elsewhere: heavy ash can close Guatemala City's airport for a few hours, which matters on 13 December and 8 January. Ash irritates the airways if you have any respiratory sensitivity, so carry a light scarf on a heavy-ash morning.

OPTIONAL READING *More places, if you have the time and the energy.*

More to see and do

The De La Gente tours are booked ahead. Everything else here is walk-in.

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Tour	De La Gente coffee-farm tour	Pickup at La Ermita de Santa Lucia, west Antigua	The closest this base gets to seeing how people actually live and work. The coffee comes from smallholder farms in a co-operative.	map↗ · Shuttle pickup at La Ermita de Santa Lucia church, west side of Antigua 14.5542617, -90.7383453
Do	Museo del Jade	Centro Histórico	Jade museum on the classic walking-tour route near Central Park; visitable independently. Walk-in	map↗ · Street door at 4a Calle Oriente No. 10, in the El Jaulón building, a short walk east of Parque Central. 14.5574332, -90.7325034
Do	Santo Domingo museums	Barrio de la Concepción	Museum complex in the Santo Domingo convent ruins where the classic walking tour ends at 12:30. Walk-in	map↗ · The Paseo de los Museos entrance at the east end of 3a Calle Oriente 14.5594559, -90.7295263
Do	Santa Catalina Arch	Barrio de la Concepción	Antigua's landmark arch, a short flat walk from Barrio de la Concepción and the market. Walk-in	map↗ · The arch itself, spanning 5a Avenida Norte 14.5596256, -90.7342772
Do	Antigua municipal market	Alameda Santa Lucía	The city's main market, beside the Rebulí bus terminal; runs in Spanish, not English. Walk-in	map↗ · The market complex on 4a Calle Poniente beside the bus terminal; several entrances 14.5583509, -90.739074

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Do	Cerro de la Cruz	North-east edge, above Barrio de la Concepción	Hilltop cross above the city's north-east edge; the barrio climbs steadily towards it. Walk-in	map↗ · The mirador terrace with the stone cross 14.5643144, -90.7317686
Tour	De La Gente "Antigua Day Trip"	Antigua, 09:45 pickup	About 7 hours of culture, coffee and cuisine with De La Gente, US$72 pp, about CAD 100. Book ahead and confirm the price by email (tours@dlgcoffee.org)	map↗ 14.557682, -90.729764
Tour	San Miguel Escobar community tour	San Miguel Escobar	3-hour community-tourism visit through De La Gente's partner co-op, lunch optional. Book ahead and confirm what is included	map↗ · Meets in Antigua and shuttles out to the village ,

More on this area: Guatemala's official tourism board. Antigua listings, events and seasonal happenings. Visit Guatemala (INGUAT: official)

Base 3: Copán Ruinas · 3 nights

Contents



The Maya ball court, Copán Ruinas, Honduras



The Hieroglyphic Stairway, Copán Ruinas



A carved stone monument near the Acropolis, Copán Ruinas

Copán Ruinas at a glance

YOUR DATES	4 Jan to 7 Jan · 3 nights
HOW THE STAY RUNS	A short stay built around a single essential anchor: the ruins at their 08:00 opening. A second, lighter day covers the museum, town, and macaw sanctuary before the shuttle out to Guatemala City for the overnight transit ahead of the flight to Granada.
WHERE YOU STAY	**Casa Buena Vista 3** · if that one is gone: **Experience the authentic Copán Ruins**
GETTING HERE	**Antigua → Copán Ruinas (border crossing)** 4 Jan
ON TO GRANADA	**Copán Ruinas → Guatemala City** 7 Jan **Mariana's Petit Hotel** 7–8 Jan **Guatemala City → Managua (flight)** 8 Jan **Managua airport → Granada (road)** 8 Jan
TO BOOK FOR THIS STOP	**Antigua → Copán Ruinas (border crossing)** BOOK NOW **Casa Buena Vista 3** BOOK NOW **The Copán Maya archaeological park** NO BOOKING NEEDED **Macaw Mountain Bird Park & Nature Reserve** NO BOOKING NEEDED
BOOKING CARDS	**Booking cards for Copán Ruinas** (p. 68)

Copán Ruinas: quieter, less-touristed

Copán Ruinas is one of the quieter, less-touristed bases on this trip. A small colonial town of a few thousand people, built around cobblestone streets and red-tile roofs, that exists because of the Maya ruins about one and a half kilometres away. Travellers who've been through the bigger stops on this route say Copán doesn't feel crowded, and most of the people in the plaza are locals, not visitors. • **Role in the trip:** a short discovery stop. The base gives you two unhurried days at the ruins before the transit day to Guatemala City and the flight to Nicaragua. • **Key facts:** Copán is the wet, grey outlier of your six bases in January, which most trip descriptions get wrong, in the middle of everyone else's dry season. The town sits at about 600 m in a sheltered western valley. January station normals are 13 rain days, 67 mm, humidity around 89% and about four hours of sun a day. Highs sit near 21.8°C and nights drop to about 15.8°C. February improves, but you are not here then. None of that makes Copán a washout. Rain mostly comes as showers and overcast stretches, not all-day downpours. The humidity figure is the pre-dawn one: mornings open in valley fog and heavy dew that burns off by mid-morning, and afternoons sit nearer 55–65%. Clear mornings are scarce. Pack a light rain layer and a light warm layer for an early start at the ruins: 15°C at 7am feels cool. A norte, a Caribbean cold front spilling over the divide, can add one to three fully overcast, drizzly days as well. The whole town is walkable within about four blocks of the central plaza, but it's built on a slope. Streets climb away from the plaza, unlike Panajachel's flat Calle del Lago. Copán and Ometepe have the weakest healthcare of the six bases on this trip. The town has small private clinics but no emergency care, and the nearest properly-equipped hospital, in San Pedro Sula, is 2.5–3 hours away by road. Read the base essentials note below before you go.

Getting to your base

This is the hardest travel day of the trip. You cross into Honduras at El Florido, and the border, not the distance, makes the day long. Copán opens with an easy afternoon for that reason.

GETTING THERE **Antigua → Copán Ruinas (border crossing)** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 68 ›

map↗ · collection from your own door at Distrito Antigua Apartment F, Antigua; confirm the pickup time with the operator the evening before
14.556889, -90.733684

4 Jan

The hardest travel day of the trip: the 03:30 El Florido shuttle, Monday to Saturday, five to six hours door to door. Read the Watch-out below BEFORE you book this leg. Copán opens with an easy afternoon.

Watch out: READ THIS BEFORE YOU CHOOSE: it is a safety question as well as a comfort one. Global Affairs Canada lists CA-11 at the El Florido border under avoid non-essential travel. It separately tells Canadians to avoid travelling after dark, once for border crossings and again for road travel (Government of Canada country page for Guatemala, read 31 August 2026). A 03:30 departure in early January puts roughly three hours of this leg on the road before first light. We cannot tell you the shared shuttle is safe. The private vehicle lets you leave after first light, around 06:30 instead of 03:30, which moves the whole run into daylight. It also allows comfort stops at your own pace, and you avoid waiting on ten other passengers at the border, where a shared shuttle moves at the pace of its slowest passenger. Price it against the shared option before you decide: on a day of five to six hours door to door, longer if the border lineup is slow, starting before dawn, the difference also buys back part of the morning. The crossing itself is closed nightly from 9pm to 6am (Global Affairs Canada, read 27 August 2026); your shuttle runs well inside that, so the closure matters only if a day slips.

Arrival and settling in

Canadians need no visa. The official entry tariff is US$3 per person, about CAD 4, in cash at the border; the booth commonly collects up to US$5, about CAD 7, and your budget funds it at that, so carry US$10 for two, about CAD 14, in small bills. Both lempira and quetzales are accepted on either side of the crossing.

- **Getting your bearings:** Copán uses no street names in practice. Directions are given from the central plaza or another landmark, and taxi drivers expect to be told where you are going the same way. Everything of importance sits within four blocks of the plaza. It is the easiest town on the trip to orient yourself in.
- **Within five minutes' walk:** the restaurants, the tour operators, the shops and the private clinics, all inside those four blocks. The archaeological site is further out, 1.5 km, twenty minutes on foot or five by tuk-tuk.
- **Money and everyday shopping:** quetzales are still widely accepted here because the border is only 12 km away, so there is no rush to change money on arrival.
- **Evenings:** the bars on the plaza are the one predictable noise source in town. The plaza stays busy into the evening. Ask your host which streets they would walk after dark and which they would not.

Where to stay

Book a block or two off Parque Central. Copán is small: everything sits inside a four-block radius. Distance from the square matters because its bars are the only noise in town.

NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHERE IN TOWN, AND WHAT EACH ONE IS LIKE

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
El Centro, a block or two off the plaza RECOMMENDED Best noise profile of the six bases, except the bars on the square itself. Families are out on the streets well into the evening; ask your host about anywhere specific after dark.	Cobblestone on a slope. The town is built on a hill; pitches inside the four-block core are moderate.	Everything the town has: restaurants, tour operators, shops and the private clinics, all within a few blocks of the square.	Walk. The ruins are 1.5 km, twenty minutes on foot or under five by tuk-tuk. Tuk-tuks cost about US$1, roughly CAD 1.40. Search on Avenida Copán and Calle Independencia, the two streets running off the plaza.	**Mixed.** Hotels and B&Bs from budget ensuites to one upper heritage tier, all within two blocks of the plaza, plus a small number of self-contained apartments.

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
Barrio Buena Vista Named in the listings as the quieter side of town: away from the few places that stay open. Local, not visitor.	A few blocks uphill from the square, same cobbles. Short climb back.	Residential. Limited selection; the square with the restaurants and shops is a few blocks downhill.	Walk down to the plaza. Tuk-tuks, shuttles and tour pickups all start there. Search uphill of Calle Independencia, three to four blocks north-west of the plaza.	**Mid.** Small hotels and guesthouses, quieter than the plaza stock and priced with it.
The corridor toward the ruins Quiet because there is nothing out here to make noise, and further from the plaza, where the evening happens.	East of town along the road to the ruins, which sit 1.5 km from the plaza. Cobbled, with the town's steepest pitches on the approaches.	Outside the service core. Dinner, the pharmacy and the ATM all mean the walk back into town.	Under twenty minutes on foot to the archaeological site, five by tuk-tuk. Up to twenty minutes back into the centre for anything else. Search along the Carretera a las Ruinas, the road east out of town.	**Mid.** A handful of hotels trading the service core for proximity to the site and more space.

Copán is hotel and B&B country. There is a small self-contained apartment market, but most of what you will see is a boutique hotel or a B&B with a private bathroom.

Book early and budget the full nightly rate. Three nights reaches no discount tier anywhere, and the quiet, well-reviewed end of the market here is a small pool.

Ask for distance and direction from Parque Central instead of an address. The town works on landmarks, not street numbers.

Check whether the rate includes tax. At least one hotel adds 19 per cent at the desk. Assume rural mornings: nothing we found addresses roosters, bells or early fireworks.

WHERE WE WOULD BOOK, AND WHY IN THIS ORDER

Property	Neighbourhood	What it is	Roughly	Why it sits here	Where to book
Casa Buena Vista 3 RECOMMENDED BOOKING CARD (p. 69) map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Copan Ruinas. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. approximate: 14.8416, -89.1571	El Centro, a block or two off the plaza	One of a small cluster of apartments run by the same owner just off the square, quiet by its own description and consistently well kept.	**CAD 248** CAD 82.67 a night	4.99 across 167 reviews is the strongest evidence anywhere on this trip, and it sits inside the four-block core so everything is a short walk, with some moderate slopes. At three nights the type of place barely matters.	Airbnb
Experience the authentic Copán Ruins ALTERNATE BOOKING CARD (p. 69) map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Copan Ruinas. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. approximate: 14.8446, -89.1548	Not resolved. The listing places it outside the four-block core, roughly half a kilometre from Parque Central.	An entire one-bedroom unit for two, with a full kitchen, air conditioning and hot water, a little further out and noticeably cheaper.	**CAD 170** CAD 56.67 a night	CAD 78 cheaper and still 4.95 across 133 reviews, which would lead the field at most bases. Second because we could not fix which part of town it is in.	Airbnb

Each of the two has a booking card in Part 6, with the contact, the rate and space to write down what you reserved. We have not held dates on either.

WHERE YOU STAY **Casa Buena Vista 3** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 69 ›

map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Copan Ruinas. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door.

approximate: 14.8416, -89.1571

4 Jan to 7 Jan 2027

A colonial apartment a couple of blocks off Parque Central, with its own kitchen and bathroom, air conditioning and hot water.

> **Watch out:** It has air conditioning, but Copán sits at 600 metres in a sheltered valley and January nights drop to about 15.8°C, so a fan is enough. Do not pay extra anywhere in this town for cooling you will not use.

KINDS OF PLACE
Boutique and heritage hotels · B&Bs with private bathrooms · Budget hotels with ensuite doubles · Guesthouses · Self-contained apartments and townhouses

WHERE TO SEARCH
SEARCH **The property, directly by email or phone** The right first move here. Copán accommodation is harder to find online than most towns and some hotels take no online reservations. Wikivoyage's listing carries direct emails and phone numbers.
SEARCH **Booking.com** The standard hotel roster and the best of the platforms here. Peak prices in Copán start in December and run through February.
SEARCH **Expedia** Useful for scale. It lists 43 hotels and other lodgings under its hotel categories, as counted on one day. The apartments here turn up on Airbnb and Vrbo instead.
SEARCH **Vrbo** Eleven properties in Copán Ruinas on your dates, most of them two-bedroom townhouses a few minutes' walk off the plaza, and one of the two channels carrying self-contained apartments here. Checked 22 August 2026.
No local agency exists. Searching for a Copán rental agency turns up only the global booking sites and travel guides.

ARRIVING BY CAR
Tuk-tuks reach everywhere for about US$1, roughly CAD 1.40, and are the normal way to move with luggage. No source states whether a vehicle can reach a specific door, so ask the property, and ask how many steps from where one can stop.

What to do

Three nights with two full days clear of travel, the 5th and 6th of January, which still makes this the tightest base on the trip. Do the ruins at their 08:00 opening on the clearer of the two mornings; the lighter day carries the museum, the town and the macaw sanctuary. The 6th is Día de Reyes, so expect the town quieter than usual that day, with some family-run places closed.

What to do: the anchor & the must-books FULL DETAIL · BOOKING CARDS IN PART 6

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***The Copán Maya archaeological park*** NO BOOKING NEEDED · BOOKING CARD p. 69 ›

CAD 27.86 per person · About 3 hours for the core park, or most of a day with the tunnels and both museums. · Early morning, for cool air and low light across the stelae. Hours are widely reported as 08:00 to 16:00. The park's own custodian publishes tariffs but no hours (sitiomayadecopan.hn, checked 31 August 2026), and third-party sources disagree, one giving 08:00 to 18:00. Ring +504 2651-4108 or ask your hotel the day before. At the ticket window you pay 20 US dollars a person, about CAD 27.86, which covers the main site and Las Sepulturas together. The tunnels and the two museums are separate tickets.

Widely regarded as home to the finest sculpture corpus anywhere in the Maya world. A UNESCO World Heritage Maya city, walkable from the plaza, with the option to add the tunnels and both museums for a fuller day.

The park is about 1.5km from the plaza, walkable, though a tuk-tuk costs next to nothing. Inside it's a big grassed plaza with the stelae standing where they were raised, and the carving on them is still sharp twelve hundred years on. You can pick out faces and hands. The Hieroglyphic Stairway is what most people come for, sixty-odd steps carrying the longest Maya text anywhere in the world. Paths are level grass and packed earth with some stone steps, and scarlet macaws move about the entrance area in the open. The tunnels are a separate add-on and they're narrow, low and humid, so skip them if that isn't for you. Go on your first clear morning. There's very little shade out on that plaza by eleven.

On the highway about 1.5 km east of the plaza, Copán Ruinas

map↗

14.8385007, -89.1435351

Watch out: Go on your first clear morning; do not save it for the last day. With 13 rain days typical in January and about four hours of sun, clear mornings are not guaranteed, and three nights leave no slack for a lost day. The cost figure is the park ticket, which covers the main site and Las Sepulturas together. The tunnels, the Sculpture Museum and the Regional Museum are separate tickets sold at the same window, and they sit in the sightseeing allowance, not this figure.

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Macaw Mountain Bird Park & Nature Reserve***

NO BOOKING NEEDED · BOOKING CARD p. 70 ›

CAD 13.17 per person · About 2 hours at an unhurried pace. · Open 08:00–16:00 year-round, no advance booking needed. At the gate you pay 250 lempira a person, about CAD 13.17. The park's own site carries no date against this, so treat it as indicative and confirm on arrival.

A 10-acre forested bird sanctuary, home to 300+ birds across 30+ species, including Honduras's national bird, the Scarlet Macaw. The most accessible stop on the trip. Wheelchair accessible, its own parking lot, bilingual staff, and 10 minutes from the central square. A gentler half-day to pair with the ruins.

Macaw Mountain sits about ten minutes out of town at San Pedrito, and it's the easiest morning on the whole trip. Paved paths, gently graded from the gate right down to the river, with benches most of the way and shade the whole time. It's noticeably cooler under that canopy than up in the plaza. The birds are in big planted enclosures, so you're looking up into trees for most of them, and at the encounter area the staff will set a scarlet macaw on your arm. That's Honduras's national bird, and it's heavier than you'd think. There's a café over the water at the bottom if you want to sit a while. Allow two hours and take it slowly. The only climb all day is the walk back up to the gate.

San Pedrito, Sesesmil valley north of town, Copán Ruinas

map↗ · The park entrance in the Sesesmil valley north of town

14.8532147, -89.1548354

> **Watch out:** The easiest anchor experience at any base on the trip, with one decision to make before you go. Staff may offer to set a macaw on your arm. Birds do not carry rabies, so this is not the rabies question your Prep Guide deals with. It is still animal contact, with two risks of its own. Parrots are the classic carrier of psittacosis, which shows up as a chest infection and hits harder the older you are, so wash your hands before they go near your face. A large macaw's beak and claws break skin easily, so wash any wound properly and watch it. Global Affairs Canada's advice for all three countries lists birds among the animals to avoid contact with. The cautious option is to watch. Agree between you beforehand, not at the aviary.

Eating

Everything is around Parque Central and along Calle de los Artesanos, which is a two-minute walk from one end to the other. The Mercado Municipal comedores are the cheap end and they are open daily until five.

The food is Honduran. • **Breakfast is desayuno catracho:** eggs, beans, tortillas, avocado and grilled beef on one plate. Anafre is a bean-and-cheese pot melted over coals and shared. Baleadas are a flour tortilla folded around beans, cheese and cream, and two or three of them make a meal. Street food is pupusas, pastelitos and grilled elote.

The range is narrow: Copán does not carry the service depth of Antigua or Granada. For a two to three night stop that is no problem. The choice is small, and good.

Typical is a comedor almuerzo of rice, beans, tortillas and meat.

Timing matters more here than at the other five bases. Lunch is the main meal, and shops and facilities close from noon to two so families can eat together. The town shuts down early. Local food here is a midday thing, and an evening plan means a sit-down restaurant, not a comedor.

Getting around Copán Ruinas

No formal transit. Tuk-tuks and moto-taxis only, which is enough for a four-block town.

- **Agree the fare first:** There is no ride-hailing app in Copán and no meter in any tuk-tuk. Settle the price before you get in, every time.
- **The one thing booked online:** The onward shuttle to Guatemala City, with Adrenalina Tours at **https://adrenalinatours.com/product/shuttle-copan-to-guatemala-city/**. Everything else is arranged on the street.

> **Walking**
> Everything within the 4-block core. The easiest town on the trip to navigate on foot, terrain aside.

Tuk-tuk / moto-taxi
Use for the ruins, Macaw Mountain, or skipping the hill back from Terramaya/La Escalinata. Pay cash, agree fare before riding. L10–30 for most in-town trips (~CAD 0.53–1.58); gather on the north/south sides of the plaza.

Copán Ruinas essentials at a glance
READ THIS ONE CAREFULLY. Copán and Ometepe have the weakest healthcare of the six bases. Copán's own clinic (Clínica Copán Ruinas, Avenida Copán, Barrio El Centro) does not offer emergency care and is only open Mon–Fri 07:00–17:00, Sat 07:00–12:00 (we could not confirm a phone number for it; ask your host). For anything urgent, the documented local contact is Dr. Boqui at Clínica Handal (tel +504 2651-4408). Ask your hotel to help make this call if needed, since it's not confirmed whether English is spoken there. • **Local police:** +504 2651-4060. • **Escalation for anything serious:** the nearest properly-equipped hospital is 2.5–3 hours away in San Pedro Sula, about 180 km by road, or five to six hours by road to Guatemala City's private hospitals. Call your travel insurer's 24-hour assistance line before seeking treatment, not after. There's no evidenced English-capable emergency facility in town. In a serious situation the question is which direction to travel, and the insurer's network should help decide. • **Regional hospitals:** the nearest are Hospital de Occidente and a facility in Santa Rosa de Copán. Ask your insurer before you travel which of them their network would use, and confirm the cover extends to western Honduras. • **Transit card:** none. Cash only, tuk-tuks and buses. • **Emergency number:** Honduras runs a national 911, and the Government of Canada's own advice is to dial it in an emergency (read 28 Aug 2026). For anything medical, your insurer's 24-hour assistance line is a more reliable first call than any local emergency number, because it can direct you and authorize treatment at the same time.

OPTIONAL READING *More places, if you have the time and the energy.*

More to see and do

No advance booking needed for any of these except one. Luna Jaguar hot springs limits numbers and confirms a reservation only once it has been paid for, with no refund if you cannot come. Book it after the Copán dates are firm: +504 2651-4746 or +504 9706-5995, ventas@lunajaguarspa.com, or the ticket office a block past the bus terminal in the Hotel Patty building, open Monday to Saturday 08:00 to 17:00. The spa runs 13:00 to 21:00 with last entry before 19:00. At 22 km it is beyond tuk-tuk range, so take the operator's own afternoon excursion, which returns late on a mountain road, or hire a driver and come back earlier. Prices are on the spa's own site; confirm them when you reserve. Checked 31 August 2026.

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Do	Luna Jaguar hot springs	Agua Caliente, north of Copán Ruinas	A natural hot-spring eco-spa 22km north of town, with Maya-inspired architecture.	map↗ · The spa's office at Agua Caliente, where wristbands are issued 14.8401238, -89.1548262
Do	Las Sepulturas	Copán archaeological zone	Residential Maya complex covered by the same park ticket; a quieter walk than the acropolis. Pay at gate (included in park ticket)	map↗ · Signed gate on the CA-11, about 1 km east of the main entrance. Exact point not confirmed. 14.8416579, -89.1354654
Do	Los Tuneles (the tunnels)	Copán archaeological park	Excavated tunnels beneath the acropolis, a separate US$15 add-on, about CAD 21; have closed for works before. Pay at gate; call ahead re closures	map↗ · Entered from inside the main site; the extra ticket is bought at the main office. Exact point not confirmed. 14.8385007, -89.1435351
Do	Sculpture Museum, Museo de Escultura	Copán archaeological park entrance	Holds the site's stone sculpture corpus, US$10, about CAD 14. IHAH publishes tickets but no hours; travellers report weekday opening with entry winding down by about 16:00 (checked 28 Aug 2026). Go before mid-afternoon on your Tuesday or Wednesday, and have your hotel confirm the day before	map↗ · Its own door in the visitor-centre complex, across the parking lot from the ticket booth 14.838631, -89.1466934
Do	Museo Regional de Arqueologia	Copán Ruinas town	Town archaeology museum, about an hour, US$5, about CAD 7, open late, which makes it a good wet-afternoon fallback. Walk-in	map↗ · Street door on the Parque Central in town, not at the ruins 14.8384803, -89.1558056

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Do	**Rastrojon**	Outside Copán Ruinas	Outlying IHAH Maya site near Copán at US$3, about CAD 4, on the same fee table. Pay at the gate, and confirm hours and access with IHAH on +504 2651-4108	map↗ · A hillside gate about 2 km from the main park on the Santa Rita road 14.8566003, -89.1315929
Tour	**Site guide at the park entrance**	Copán park entrance	Licensed guide hired at the gate for the 3-hour site visit, US$30-40 per group, about CAD 42 to CAD 56; no website. Hire at the entrance or via hotel	map↗ · The guides' desk at the main park entrance. Exact point not confirmed. 14.8385007, -89.1435351
Do	**Scarlet macaw feeding at the ruins**	Copán archaeological park	Free-flying scarlet macaws are fed at 08:00 and 13:00 at the site; time the visit to one of those. No booking; timed to feeds	map↗ · Inside the main park; the birds range around the entrance area. Exact point not confirmed. 14.8385007, -89.1435351

More on this area: Honduras' official tourism site. Copán is a featured UNESCO destination with attractions and activity listings. **Honduras.travel (official)**

Base 4: Granada · 13 nights

Contents



Parque Central's colonial façades, Granada, Nicaragua



Granada's landmark yellow cathedral



Las Isletas and Volcán Mombacho, Granada

Granada at a glance	
YOUR DATES	8 Jan to 21 Jan · 13 nights
HOW THE STAY RUNS	Flight and transfer in, then a light settle-in day opens the stay's longest run, on an anchor / day-trip / rest rhythm. The two anchors are the Las Isletas boat trip and the old-town walking tour. Fill the day-trip slots between them from the Granada list: Mombacho and Masaya are the obvious picks, and neither needs a booking.
WHERE YOU STAY	**apartamentos Casa Amarilla** · if that one is gone: **Apartamentos Höla! Relax & Common Pool**
GETTING HERE	**Copán Ruinas → Guatemala City** 7 Jan **Mariana's Petit Hotel** 7–8 Jan **Guatemala City → Managua (flight)** 8 Jan **Managua airport → Granada (road)** 8 Jan
ON TO ISLA DE OMETEPE	**Granada → Isla de Ometepe (road and ferry)** 21 Jan
TO BOOK FOR THIS STOP	**Copán Ruinas → Guatemala City** BOOK NOW **Mariana's Petit Hotel** BOOK NOW **Guatemala City → Managua (flight)** BOOK NOW **Managua airport → Granada (road)** BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY **apartamentos Casa Amarilla** BOOK NOW **Las Isletas de Granada Boat Tour** BOOK ONCE YOU'RE THERE **The Original Free Walking Tour Granada** NO BOOKING NEEDED
BOOKING CARDS	**Booking cards for Granada** (p. 70)

Granada, Nicaragua: 13 nights (Jan 8–20)

Granada was founded in 1524 and has been lived in ever since. After Copán's cool valley mornings it is flat, hot and dry. Everything sits inside a ten-block grid of cobblestone streets radiating out from Parque Central: the cathedral, the market and the lakefront, all walkable and flat. Volcán Mombacho stands green over the rooftops to the south, and the eastern edge of town runs into Lake Nicaragua and its 365 tiny islands, the isletas. It is touristed, and a cruise-day crowd shares the restaurant strip a few afternoons a week, but the town is big enough to absorb it. Thirteen nights here is the longest single stay of the trip. The town has a day-trip list (a volcano, a lake full of islands, a market town, a craft-village circuit), a good food scene and, unusually for this route, a deep apartment rental market. Choose your street carefully. Granada's liveliest strip, La Calzada, is also its loudest, with cruise groups, live music and restaurant noise well into the evening. The quiet is one block over, and this Blueprint books you there.

Getting to your base

Getting to Granada takes two days: out of Honduras by road on the first, a night beside the Guatemala City airport, then the short flight to Managua the next morning. There is no direct public transport from Managua airport to Granada, so book a car ahead for the last hour.

GETTING THERE **Copán Ruinas → Guatemala City** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 70 ›

map↗ · the shuttle stop at Parque Central, Copan Ruinas
14.838797, -89.1554529
7 Jan

The return shuttle out of Honduras to Guatemala City, putting you near the airport the night before the Managua flight instead of making both in one day.

Watch out: This is a second full transit day, back-to-back with the flight the next morning. It is the only back-to-back on the itinerary, caused by the Copán routing. Plan the two travel days as a pair: an early night near the airport, nothing booked for the evening you reach Granada, and no activity the following morning.

WHERE YOU STAY **Mariana's Petit Hotel** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 71 ›

map↗ · the hotel entrance on 20 calle, zona 13, about a kilometre from the terminal
14.5786478, -90.5323538
7 Jan to 8 Jan 2027

A small family-run place on a residential street in Aurora II, about a kilometre from the terminal. Free shuttle both ways, a front desk staffed around the clock, and breakfast from 06:30.

Watch out: The free shuttle runs 05:00 to 22:00. Outside those hours it costs US$3 a ride, about CAD 4, and needs arranging ahead, so fix your morning pickup when you book, not on the night.

GETTING THERE **Guatemala City → Managua (flight)** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 71 ›

map↗ · departures at La Aurora, Guatemala City
14.5879704, -90.5306907
8 Jan

The one regional flight of the trip, Copa CM380 nonstop from Guatemala City to Managua, about an hour twenty in the air, mid-morning. It turns two long road days into a single morning.

Watch out: Re-check the Copa schedule before you book, because schedules and fares both move. If the nonstop is dropped, Avianca flies the same route with one stop through San Salvador.

GETTING THERE **Managua airport → Granada (road)** BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY · BOOKING CARD p. 72 ›

map↗ · the ground-transport meeting area at Managua arrivals
12.1444609, -86.1710823
8 Jan

About an hour by road from the terminal to Granada's colonial core, by a car and driver booked ahead who meets you with your name at arrivals.

Watch out: Give the operator your flight number, not just a time. If the flight is late, a booking with the flight number still gets met; one with only a clock time does not.

Arrival and settling in

- **Getting your bearings:** Granada is a flat cobblestone grid and two streets do most of the work: Calle La Calzada runs east from Parque Central down to the lake, and Calle Atravesada crosses it as the commercial street. Everything you need sits inside a ten-block radius of the plaza, so if you can find the cathedral you can find your way home.
- **Within five minutes' walk:** from a Centro Historico door: the plaza, the cathedral, the museums, two private clinics and several pharmacies that stay open late.
- **Money and everyday shopping:** Calle Atravesada is the everyday commercial street, not the tourist strip, and it is where the banks, the ATMs and the market are. Draw cash there. Taxis are unmetered and paid in cash, US$1 to US$2 a trip, roughly CAD 1.40 to CAD 2.80, so agree the fare first.
- **Heat:** this is the first base where the nights do not cool down, staying above 22 degrees Celsius. Check the air conditioning works on the first evening.

- **Daytime rhythm:** cruise-day tour groups share the historic centre three afternoons a week, and horse carriages on cobbles are constant background.

Where to stay

Book in the Centro Historico, on a street off La Calzada and off Parque Central. Granada is flat and holds everything inside ten blocks, so the choice is the street, then a quiet room on it. Xalteva, five to ten blocks west, is quieter and runs in Spanish.

NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHERE IN TOWN, AND WHAT EACH ONE IS LIKE

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
Centro Historico, off the Calzada RECOMMENDED Called by far the safest area to stay in. Cruise-day tour groups three afternoons a week, horse carriages all day.	Flat, and the only base a source calls a flat city. Cobblestone grid, so Antigua's footing without the climbing.	Everything inside ten blocks: Parque Central, the cathedral, the museums, two private clinics, late pharmacies.	Walk for almost everything. Street taxis US$1 to US$2, roughly CAD 1.40 to CAD 2.80, cheapest of the six. InDrive and Aventón operate here. Search on Calle 14 de Septiembre, Calle El Martirio and the streets off La Calzada.	**Above average.** Colonial houses, apartments and condos through local managers, plus boutique hotels. Deepest apartment market of the six.
Calle La Calzada Loudest at night and most international. Excellent to walk to, wrong place to book.	Flat and pedestrian, eight blocks from Parque Central to the lake.	The restaurant and bar strip, and the densest concentration of both in the city.	Central, and where you walk for dinner wherever you sleep. Search on La Calzada itself, between Parque Central and the lake.	**Premium.** The most expensive accommodation per square metre in Granada.
Xalteva and the west side Quieter and residential, all-Nicaraguan neighbours. Three blocks off the Calzada, English stops working.	Same flat cobblestone grid, five to ten blocks west of the plaza.	Neighbourhood shops and local eating, not the strip. The market and the banks are on Calle Atravesada, between here and the plaza.	Five to ten flat blocks to Parque Central, or a US$2 taxi, about CAD 3, back after dinner. Search around Calle Real Xalteva, west of the plaza.	**Mid.** Residential colonial housing at about 20 percent below core rents.
El Caimito Described as quiet and safe, and recommended for peace, not as a compromise. Mostly locals, not visitors.	Flat, just outside the historic centre.	Residential streets, not services. The core is a short walk or a US$2 taxi, about CAD 3.	Short walk or taxi into the centre, where everything else starts. Search along Calle El Caimito, on the lake side of the centre.	**Mid.** Residential houses and apartments outside the core, priced below it.

Ask for a quiet room away from the street. The colonial housing here is built the same way as Antigua's, so which room you get changes how it sounds far more than which street you are on.

Unlike Guatemala, nothing cools down overnight here, so confirm in writing that air conditioning is in the bedroom, whether it is included in the rate or charged extra, and how loud the unit is. One property advertises quiet air conditioners as a selling point, which suggests the default is loud.

Puerto Asese and the lakeshore pockets are scenic but lose the walkability that makes this base work.

Thirteen nights qualifies for a weekly rate, though not the monthly tier, and over that many nights quiet matters more than a block's walk.

WHERE WE WOULD BOOK, AND WHY IN THIS ORDER

Property	Neighbourhood	What it is	Roughly	Why it sits here	Where to book
apartamentos Casa Amarilla RECOMMENDED BOOKING CARD (p. 72) map↗ · the street door on Calle El Martirio, half a block south of Hotel La Pergola 11.9277242, -85.9503819	Centro Historico, off the Calzada	A yellow colonial house divided into apartments, five hundred metres from the centre, with the Calzada close enough to walk and far enough to sleep.	**CAD 766** CAD 58.92 a night	A hot base, with nights that never drop below about 22 degrees, so you need air conditioning to sleep. This has it. It is also one of only two properties on the trip listing soundproofing, and it is two hundred metres off the noisiest street in Granada.	Booking.com
Apartamentos Höla! Relax & Common Pool ALTERNATE BOOKING CARD (p. 73) map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Granada. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. approximate: 11.9328, -85.9507	Centro Historico, off the Calzada	An apartment inside a colonial building with an open courtyard and a shared pool, directly in front of the Convento San Francisco.	**CAD 757** CAD 58.23 a night	Nine dollars cheaper across thirteen nights, in the same recommended area, and its own listing addresses noise by location: far enough from the noisiest areas that the listing describes it as quiet. Second on 77 reviews against 169, and no soundproofing.	Airbnb

Each of the two has a booking card in Part 6, with the contact, the rate and space to write down what you reserved. We have not held dates on either.

WHERE YOU STAY **apartamentos Casa Amarilla** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 72 ›

map↗ · the street door on Calle El Martirio, half a block south of Hotel La Pergola
11.9277242, -85.9503819
8 Jan to 21 Jan 2027

A 45 square metre apartment two hundred metres off the Calzada, with air conditioning, a kitchen, two bathrooms and soundproofing listed as a room feature.

> **Watch out:** The headline figure on Booking.com is CAD 666, and taxes and fees add CAD 100, so the total is CAD 766. From the property's own page (28 Aug 2026): air conditioning is billed separately at USD 10 a day, about CAD 14, so roughly CAD 180 more if you run it nightly across the 13 nights. Payment at the property is cash only. The air conditioning charge is not in the CAD 766 or in the budget total, so it comes out of the contingency. Check-in is 14:00 to 18:00 and they ask for your arrival time in advance.

A stay of 13 nights is long enough to ask for a **weekly rate**, which is usually a real discount on the nightly price. Almost nobody applies it for you, so ask for it before you book and ask what else the host will include.

KINDS OF PLACE
Colonial houses through local managers · One-bedroom apartments and condos · Boutique hotels in the core · Studio apartments

WHERE TO SEARCH
SEARCH **GPS Nicaragua** The most complete Granada inventory we found, and the best-value source anywhere on this trip. Nightly rates, a three-night minimum, and one-bedroom stock listed separately from the colonial houses: apartments from about USD 35 a night and condo units from about USD 65. Air conditioning is listed on the houses and not on the apartment pages, so confirm it. Longer stays get better rates, and availability goes early.
SEARCH **Granada Home Rental** Owner-direct and small: three houses, six one-bedrooms, four studios. It publishes no rates on its listing pages, so everything is an enquiry. At least one listing still shows as leased until December 2024, so the site is not kept current. Call anyway, on 512-346-2326.
SEARCH **Airbnb and Vrbo** Both work here, and 13 nights qualifies for a weekly rate on each, so ask for one. With the local agency, the easiest base of the six for an apartment. Vrbo carries around 70 properties for your dates, mostly two-bedroom houses within a kilometre of the centre, and most of them offer free cancellation into late December.
SEARCH **Booking.com** Best for the boutique hotels in the core, several with the courtyard rooms worth asking for.

ARRIVING BY CAR
No car: many streets are one-way and the cobbles narrow. Arrive by the pre-booked car and driver from Managua airport set out in this chapter, about CAD 78 for the two of you, which takes you to your door.

What to do

Thirteen nights is the longest single stay of the trip, with time to relax and to see a lot. The two anchor outings are below, and the table lists more. Book the boat tour once you are here; the walking tour needs no booking. The rest of Granada is walking, eating and the lake, none of which needs booking.

What to do: the anchor & the must-books FULL DETAIL · BOOKING CARDS IN PART 6

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Las Isletas de Granada Boat Tour*** BOOK ONCE YOU'RE THERE · BOOKING CARD p. 73 ›

CAD 55.72 per person · About 1.5 to 2 hours on the water. · The 08:00 departure for birdlife and calm water, or 15:30 if you would rather have the sunset. The operator charges 40 US dollars a person, about CAD 55.72, on a minimum of two people.

A boat tour of about two hours through the 365 tiny islands off Granada's shoreline, on the eastern edge of Lake Nicaragua. It is the base's wildlife-and-nature anchor: birdlife, a stop at the small "Monkey Island" primate sanctuary and views back toward Volcán Mombacho, all from a boat with no hike. Book the boat version, not the kayak option.

You board at the lakefront and reach the islands within a few minutes. There are 365 of them, close together and thickly green, some with a single house, some just trees and herons, and the channels between them are narrow. The boat is small and open with a roof, and there's no walking beyond stepping in and out. Mombacho is in view behind. Egrets, kingfishers and cormorants are constant, and the boat pulls in at the little island where the monkeys come down to the rail. Take the 08:00 run: the water's calmer early, the birds are up, and you'll be back before the heat builds.

Centro Turistico lakefront, 3 km southeast of the plaza, Granada

map↗

approximate: 11.8991667, -85.8852778

> **Watch out:** Physically easy. It is an open boat on a large lake, so ask for a life jacket if one is not offered, and take a hat and water for the sun off the water.

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***The Original Free Walking Tour Granada*** NO BOOKING NEEDED · BOOKING CARD p. 73 ›

Free · 3 hours · The morning departure, before the heat comes up on the plaza. Confirm the meeting point and time a day or two ahead, as free-tour schedules move. Free to join. The guides work for tips, suggested at about CAD 14 to 28 a person.

A three-hour, tip-based guided walking tour of Granada's colonial core, and this base's cultural anchor. A local guide covers the cathedral, the Calzada, the old fort and the plaza and fills in the history.

The free walking tour covers Granada's colonial core in about three hours and it's flat the whole way, on cobbled streets and narrow sidewalks that are uneven in places. A local guide takes you around the yellow cathedral on the plaza, the length of La Calzada, the old fort and the market end of town, filling in the history as you go. The streets are painted ochre, blue and deep red. There's no ticket; it runs on tips, so carry some cash. Watch the heat: there's almost no shade on the plaza and it builds through the morning, so the back half is warmer than the front.

Parque Central, Granada

map↗ · Parque Central, where Granada walking tours gather; the operator confirms the exact spot when you book

11.9299292, -85.9539254

> **Watch out:** The heat builds through the morning, so the back half of the tour is the hottest part. Bring water and a hat. The walk is flat and not strenuous, but Granada is hot.

Eating

Granada's eating is laid out along one obvious line. Calle La Calzada is the eight-block pedestrian strip running from Parque Central down to the lake, and it is where nearly every visitor eats. It is also the loudest street at night and, per square metre, the most expensive in the city. Step three blocks off it and the prices drop, the menus stop being bilingual, and the food gets more Nicaraguan. The Mercado Municipal sits south of the centre.

The mix here is the widest of the six bases. Nicaraguan cooking at the local end, a deep international spread through the middle, and one fine-dining room at the top. Thirteen nights is long enough to use all three.

Typical at the local end is comida corriente, meat with rice and salad, in a comedor or a market cafetín.

Lunch is the main meal nationally, eaten between about half past eleven and half past one. Granada is one of only three cities in the country where restaurants run to eleven at night instead of closing at nine, so a late dinner is easy here, unlike at your other Nicaraguan bases.

Getting around Granada

Granada is the flattest, most walkable base on the trip. Everything inside the ten-block colonial core is on foot.

> **Walking**
> Everything inside the ten-block colonial core. Free, and flat.

> **Taxi (in-town)**
> Longer hops, evening returns. $1.40–2.80 CAD. Negotiated cash fares, no meters anywhere in Nicaragua outside a couple of apps.

> **InDrive / Aventón**
> In-town rides, airport-adjacent trips. Similar to taxi, pre-negotiated in-app. One of only two Nicaraguan cities (with Managua) where these ride-hailing apps operate.

> **UCA microbus (Managua ↔ Granada)**
> Any Managua trip. ~$1–3 CAD, 1–1.5 hours. Runs roughly 5am–7pm, waits usually under 20 minutes.

> **Day-trip tour transport**
> Mombacho, Masaya, Pueblos Blancos, Isletas. Included in tour price, all bookable through Mono Loco Adventures.

Granada essentials at a glance

• **Healthcare. Day-to-day:** two private clinics in the town centre, several late-opening pharmacies, three established dentists. • **Healthcare. Serious care:** Hospital Vivian Pellas or Hospital Metropolitano, both in Managua, roughly 50 minutes by car. Both are described as modern, with US-trained staff, and the country's top-tier hospitals; Vivian Pellas is noted for English-speaking doctors. • **Insurance pattern:** Nicaragua runs on a pay-first, reclaim-later basis for private care. A Canadian travel insurance policy won't be on the local direct-billing network. Keep receipts for everything and call the insurer's assistance line before or immediately after any treatment, exactly as at Copán. • **Money:** Granada has ATMs and banking services in town (unlike Ometepe, where the few ATMs are unreliable), so cash is easier here than at the bases before and after it. • **Language:** English works on and near La Calzada in hotels, restaurants and tour operators. Off that strip (the market, pharmacies, taxis, clinics) is Spanish-only in practice. Xalteva, west of the centre, is more Spanish-dominant than the tourist core; carry a phrasebook or translation app there. • **Climate reminder:** this is a hot, dry base. Daily highs around 28–29°C, overnight lows never dropping below about 22°C, unlike the highlands. Your apartment bills A/C separately at USD 10 a day, about CAD 14, roughly CAD 180 across the stay, in cash at the property; that comes out of the contingency, not the accommodation line. Check it works on the first evening. • **Emergency numbers (Nicaragua, national):** Police 118 · Medical assistance 128 · Firefighters 115. Nicaragua has no working general emergency number: neither 911 nor 112 is reliably answered, so dial the specific service you need (Government of Canada country page, read 31 August 2026). Dated watchouts for this stay: Dec 7–8 is La Purísima / La Gritería, nationwide, with Dec 8 a national holiday. Expect fireworks, street altars and house-to-house singing. This falls before arrival (Jan 8), so it does not affect these dates unless plans shift. No festival or closure conflicts were found for your stay (check-in Jan 8, last night Jan 20). Mid-February's Festival Internacional de Poesía de Granada has not reliably run in person since 2018, and you check out on Jan 21, well before it.

OPTIONAL READING *More places, if you have the time and the energy.*

More to see and do

Nothing here needs booking ahead. Look each one up and book direct if you decide to go.

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Do	Volcán Mombacho Cloud Forest Hike	Lower entrance on the Granada to Nandaime highway	A half-day guided hike into the cloud forest on the slopes of Volcán Mombacho, the green volcano visible from town.	map↗ · The reserve's lower entrance on the Granada to Nandaime highway, where the trucks up to the cloud forest load. 11.8512668, -86.0211079

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Tour	Masaya Volcano sunset visit	Park entrance on the Masaya highway	A combined outing to Masaya Volcano National Park for the active crater at sunset.	map↗ · The park entrance on the Masaya highway; the crater rim is a further 5 km by road. 12.0130588, -86.142219
Tour	Masaya craft market	Mercado Viejo, central Masaya	The old walled market in the middle of Masaya, the country's best-known place to buy hammocks, leather and pottery. A separate stop from the volcano, about 16 km apart.	map↗ · The Mercado Viejo, the walled craft market in central Masaya 11.9738889, -86.0936111
Tour	San Juan de Oriente and the Pueblos Blancos	San Juan de Oriente village centre	A half-day circuit through the "White Villages" south of Masaya, a string of small towns.	map↗ · San Juan de Oriente village centre, where the pottery workshops line the main road. 11.9054848, -86.074525
Do	Granada Cooking Workshop	The operator meets you centrally or collects you where you are staying	A three-hour hands-on Nicaraguan cooking class. It shows how Nicaraguans cook and eat at home.	Location not confirmed. The operator meets you centrally or collects you from where you are staying; arranged when you book.
Do	Laguna de Apoyo	40 minutes from Granada	Crater lake 40 min out and the nearest swimmable water, since Lake Nicaragua itself is for boating. Day-hire taxi or InDrive	map↗ · The signed turn-off at km 37 and a half on the Masaya to Granada highway, where the road down into the crater starts. 11.972881, -86.026152
Do	Mirador de Catarina	Laguna de Apoyo crater rim, 25 minutes	Villages 25 min away on the crater rim, about 3 C cooler, with views over the Laguna de Apoyo crater. Day-hire taxi or InDrive	map↗ · The gated viewpoint terrace on the Apoyo crater rim at the north edge of Catarina 11.9134, -86.069
Do	El Gueguense at the Diriamba patron festival	Diriamba town centre, Carazo	A masked satirical dance drama performed in the street during Diriamba's patron saint festival for San Sebastian, inscribed by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage. Eight main masked characters and supporting dancers perform to violins, guitars and drums between processions, alongside the Toro Huaco and Hungaras dances. The festival runs 17 to 27 January with 20 January the main day, so its opening days fall inside your Granada stay.	map↗ · The Basilica de San Sebastian on Diriamba's central park, where the processions form. 11.8571934, -86.2399326

More on this area: Nicaragua's tourism promotion site. Colonial Granada, lakes and volcano listings. Visit Nicaragua

Base 5: Isla de Ometepe · 7 nights

Contents



Volcán Concepción at dawn, Isla de Ometepe



Volcán Concepción, Isla de Ometepe, Nicaragua



A mantled howler monkey, Maderas Biosphere Reserve, Ometepe

Isla de Ometepe at a glance	
YOUR DATES	21 Jan to 28 Jan · 7 nights
HOW THE STAY RUNS	Shuttle-and-ferry arrival, then a light day before two anchor experiences, the Authentic Ometepe village walking tour and the Ojo de Agua spring, each followed by a rest day, with a petroglyphs/villages day-trip closing out the stay.
WHERE YOU STAY	**El Encanto Garden Hotel** · if that one is gone: **Finca Aisa, Superior Bungalow**
GETTING HERE	**Granada → Isla de Ometepe (road and ferry)** 21 Jan
ON TO SAN JUAN DEL SUR	**Isla de Ometepe → San Juan del Sur** 28 Jan
TO BOOK FOR THIS STOP	**Granada → Isla de Ometepe (road and ferry)** BOOK NOW **El Encanto Garden Hotel** BOOK NOW **Authentic Ometepe Tour** BOOK NOW **Ojo de Agua Natural Pool** NO BOOKING NEEDED
BOOKING CARDS	**Booking cards for Isla de Ometepe** (p. 74)

Isla de Ometepe: the odd one out

Ometepe is the largest island in Lake Nicaragua, which is Central America's largest lake. Two volcanoes joined by a narrow isthmus, in a freshwater lake the size of Puerto Rico, reachable only by ferry. The island runs on the lake, the wind and the ferry schedule. This is the slowest and most logistically demanding base of the six. After Granada's thirteen nights of restaurants and day tours, Ometepe is a week of doing much less: a short hike, a swim at a freshwater pool, village life instead of a market circuit. Buses may or may not show up, serious or specialist care is a ferry ride away, and howler monkeys start calling at five in the morning. It is the weakest base on this trip for accommodation quality, and the one where wind on the lake can cut you off from serious care. This chapter sets out how to handle each of those risks.

Getting to your base

Granada to Ometepe is road and then water. Leave Granada around 08:00 for San Jorge, arriving about 09:15 with time in hand for the 10:30 sailing. Take the car ferry to Moyogalpa, not a lancha, and you are on the island in good light. If the forecast is windy, start an hour earlier and aim for the 08:30 instead, for the reason set out on the transfer card below. Your accommodation is 25 km from the port with an unpaved stretch at the end, so have the hotel meet you on 21 January and book its car back to the Moyogalpa dock for 28 January.

GETTING THERE **Granada → Isla de Ometepe (road and ferry)** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 74 ›

map↗ · collection from your own door on Calle El Martirio, Granada. The crossing itself leaves from PUERTO SAN JORGE, and the pin there is the dock, not the ticket office: it is on your companion map under this base

11.9277242, -85.9503819

21 Jan

Down the mainland shore to San Jorge, then across. About an hour and a quarter by road and about an hour on the water, and both hotels meet the Moyogalpa boat.

Watch out: You may see a direct Granada to Altagracia sailing mentioned online. Do not plan on it: it has not run since 2023, when low lake levels suspended it, with no sign of a restart (checked 28 Aug 2026), and it landed at a port neither property collects from. San Jorge is the route that works. On the day itself, keep nothing time-critical right after the crossing. A missed sailing is not the risk: San Jorge to Moyogalpa runs thirteen to fourteen times a day Monday to Saturday, first sailing 07:00 and last between 17:30 and 17:45, and your crossing on 21 January is a Thursday. Sunday is the exception: one published schedule drops Sunday to six sailings, another shows no reduction at all. Two independent operator listings read 31 August 2026, ometepenicaragua.com and Hostal Casa Moreno; both say times move, so have the hotel confirm the morning you travel. High wind closes the lake, and late January is inside its windiest stretch of the year. The call is usually made on the morning itself, not the day before, and it escalates: the small lanchas stop first and the large ferries keep running for a while, so on a marginal day take a big ferry. Your bookings leave no spare day around this crossing, so build the buffer inside the day: take the earliest big ferry of the morning and keep that evening free of anything time-critical. If wind closes the lake outright, stay the extra night in Granada and take the first sailing next day. Message El Encanto, the property we recommend on the island, the moment plans change; their desk is used to wind days and asks to be told if you will arrive after 19:00.

Arrival and settling in

You land at Moyogalpa, the island's main ferry port, off the San Jorge crossing. Taxi drivers meet the boat and will crowd round as you step off. The crowd is normal here. The standing rule still applies: arrange the car instead of taking one off the dock. Have your hotel send a driver or name one to ask for, which most places on the isthmus will do. If you do take a dock taxi, agree the fare in cash first, because there are no meters anywhere in Nicaragua, and take one an official is directing, not the first to reach you.

- **Getting your bearings:** Ometepe is two volcanoes joined by an isthmus. Moyogalpa is the west end, your base at Santa Cruz is the middle, and one road runs between them. At Santa Cruz the lake is on both sides of you, sunrise from one beach and sunset from the other, twelve minutes' walk apart.
- **Money and everyday shopping:** banking is thin and unreliable. BanPro lists ATMs at the supermarkets in Moyogalpa and Altagracia, but island ATMs are reported to reject some foreign cards and to run short, so do not depend on them. The supermarket is in Moyogalpa. Draw cash in Rivas before you board the ferry, and treat any real shopping as a trip to Moyogalpa, not an errand. If the ferry timing leaves you an hour in Moyogalpa on the way through, use it: it has the widest choice of food and the most services on the island.

Where to stay

Accommodation on Ometepe is limited, but the isthmus has self-contained bungalows with their own kitchen as well as ordinary hotel rooms, so the choice comes down to price. Book at Santa Cruz, on the isthmus. It is the one compact spot on the island, lake on both sides twelve minutes' walk apart, and away from Moyogalpa, the one village flagged on noise.

NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHERE IN TOWN, AND WHAT EACH ONE IS LIKE

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
Santa Cruz, the isthmus RECOMMENDED The quietest siting on the whole route. Howler monkeys start at five island-wide; only lodging away from forest edge helps.	The land bridge between the volcanoes. Flat and compact, lake on both sides twelve minutes apart.	A few farm-to-table kitchens and the island's best mid-range hotels. No supermarket, no bank.	Central to both halves of the island. Hotel pickup from the ferry dock, and a hired driver for day trips. Search along the Moyogalpa to Altagracia road where it crosses the isthmus.	**Above average.** The island's nicest mid-range hotels and lodges, above the village stock.

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
Moyogalpa Loud-ish by island standards, the one village flagged on noise, and the only place still going at eight.	The ferry town, flat-ish near the lakeshore, on the drier western side.	The supermarket, the only real restaurant selection, a hospital three blocks east of the plaza, and ATMs that are reported to reject some foreign cards.	The transport hub. Every island bus departs here, the San Jorge ferry runs from here, taxis meet every boat. Search within a few blocks of the ferry dock and the main street running up from it.	**Mid.** Hotels, hospedajes and hostels serving the ferry trade.
Santo Domingo beach strip Quieter than Moyogalpa and more transport-dependent. Sources are thin on it, so ask more before booking.	Along the beach between the volcanoes, next along from Santa Cruz. Cobblestone with unpaved stretches.	Beach hotels and their own kitchens. No village service core.	Transport-dependent. Pickup taxi from the Moyogalpa ferry about US$25, roughly CAD 35, which is what your budget carries; agree it before you load the bags for the 25 km run. Search along the Playa Santo Domingo beach road.	**Mid.** Beach hotels and lodges, the same tier as Santa Cruz without the compactness.
Altagracia Older, sleepier and local: a Nicaraguan town, not an expat enclave. Thin on services over seven nights.	The other ferry port, far side of Volcán Concepción. An hour from Moyogalpa by road.	A small health centre on the plaza and a tourist office. Limited selection, no restaurant choice.	Hourly bus to Moyogalpa, sometimes changing at El Quino. The direct Granada ferry used to dock here, but it has been suspended since 2023, so do not rely on it. Search around the central plaza and the road down to the Altagracia ferry port.	**Budget.** Family homestays and small hospedajes, the cheapest stock on the island.

Air conditioning is a must here. Confirm the room has it, confirm it runs overnight, not on a timer, and ask what happens when the power goes.

Ignore the star ratings. The same booking page shows a five-star average sitting below its own three-star average, so read the reviews instead.

Balgüe and Mérida are out. Both sit behind rough road at the far eastern end of the island.

Seven nights somewhere nothing is walkable between villages makes this a stay-put week. Book for the place you will actually sit in, not for what happens to be near it.

WHERE WE WOULD BOOK, AND WHY IN THIS ORDER

Property	Neighbourhood	What it is	Roughly	Why it sits here	Where to book
El Encanto Garden Hotel RECOMMENDED BOOKING CARD (p. 74) map↗ · the gate on the Santa Cruz road, on the isthmus 11.4884437, -85.5421471	Santa Cruz, the isthmus	Low-rise rooms set in a garden on the quiet side of the isthmus, with a tour desk that can arrange the island transport that is otherwise the hard part here.	**CAD 453** CAD 64.71 a night	Ometepe's nights sit at about 24 degrees and never really cool, so you need air conditioning to sleep. This is the cheapest room on the isthmus that has it, in a settlement with no noise flag against it, and walkable to dinner.	Booking.com
Finca Aisa, Superior Bungalow ALTERNATE BOOKING CARD (p. 75) *No map pin for this one.*	Santa Cruz, the isthmus	An entire 35 square metre bungalow in the same village, with a private kitchen, a balcony and a terrace, rated 9.7 across 39 reviews.	**CAD 847** CAD 121 a night	A kitchen on Ometepe costs about CAD 394 more across the week. Same village, best rated on the island, and it clears every must-have including air conditioning. Second only on price, because accommodation is where this budget trims first.	Booking.com

Each of the two has a booking card in Part 6, with the contact, the rate and space to write down what you reserved. We have not held dates on either.

WHERE YOU STAY **El Encanto Garden Hotel** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 74 ›

map↗ · the gate on the Santa Cruz road, on the isthmus

11.4884437, -85.5421471

21 Jan to 28 Jan 2027

A small garden hotel at Santa Cruz on the isthmus, with the lake on both sides twelve minutes' walk apart. Air conditioned rooms, a coffee house on site, and they will bring groceries in for you.

Watch out: Book the COMFORT TRIPLE by name, at CAD 453. This property also sells a Triple Room at CAD 386 with NO AIR CONDITIONING, which at 24-degree nights is the one thing you should not economize on here. Neither room has a kitchen, the main compromise at this base; they will deliver groceries but the cooking is theirs. From the hotel's own page (28 Aug 2026): check-in 11:00 to 19:00, and tell them if you will arrive later. The hotel notes it is not recommended for guests with limited mobility, which in practice means the five-minute uphill walk on an unpaved lane from the main road.

A stay of 7 nights is long enough to ask for a **weekly rate**, which is usually a real discount on the nightly price. Almost nobody applies it for you, so ask for it before you book and ask what else the host will include.

KINDS OF PLACE	Mid-range hotels and lodges · Hospedajes · Family homestays · Ecolodges and permaculture farms · Hostels · Self-contained bungalows, a small number, including a pair at Santa Cruz on the isthmus
WHERE TO SEARCH	SEARCH **Booking.com** 111 bookable properties across the island and the widest dated inventory of the three big channels. Read reviews, not stars. Its averages run two to three times the traveller-reported rate, and its search results will sometimes say a property is unavailable on your dates when the property's own page shows rooms open, so open the page before you rule anything out. SEARCH **The property, directly** Worth doing here. Inventory is small, dispersed and independent, and a direct enquiry gets a straight answer on air conditioning, backup power, dock pickup and distance from the forest edge. SEARCH **Ometepe Info** Useful for seeing what exists in a given village, not for booking your stay. It shows rate bands, not dated availability, and its inventory is mostly camping, hostels, homestays and eco-lodges in the US$5 to US$30 range, roughly CAD 7 to CAD 42, generally without air conditioning or a private bathroom. SEARCH **Vrbo** Carries entire bungalows with their own kitchen that the other channels do not list, though the ones available on your dates sit on the Altagracia side of the island, not on the isthmus: rural, with the nearest restaurants a drive away. Checked 22 August 2026. ***What the island is short of.*** Ometepe has few self-contained rentals, and most of what you will find on any channel is hotel, lodge, hospedaje and homestay shaped. Searched on Booking.com, Airbnb and Vrbo on 22 August 2026.
ARRIVING BY CAR	Taxis meet every ferry. Moyogalpa dock to the Santa Cruz strip is about US$25, roughly CAD 35; agree the fare before you load the bags. Your budget carries this run both ways: on arrival, and back to the dock on 28 January. Have the hotel arrange both.

A note on this base's accommodation match

Ometepe is the hardest base on the trip to match for quiet and a kitchen. Quiet is available on the isthmus, which is why we recommend staying there. A kitchen is harder to find: the recommended room has none, and the alternate, a bungalow in the same village, has its own. Whichever you take, it will be materially quieter than staying in Moyogalpa proper, the one placement local sources actively warn against.

What to do

Seven nights on an island where the roads are slow and the distances are longer in minutes than they look in kilometres. One outing a day is a full week here.

What to do: the anchor & the must-books FULL DETAIL · BOOKING CARDS IN PART 6

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Authentic Ometepe Tour*** **BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 75 ›**

CAD 34.83 per person · About 5 hours at an easy pace. · Start at 08:00 to 09:00, so the walking falls in the cooler half of the day. The operator charges 25 US dollars a person for two or more, about CAD 34.83, or 30 solo. Site admissions on the day are not included.

A guided tour through scenic nature trails connecting with local families, observing traditional handcrafting, and experiencing daily life in a rural Nicaraguan village. The best combination on the island of seeing how people live and getting out into the countryside. Gentle trails and everyday village life.

The Authentic Ometepe tour starts at Sintiope and runs about five hours, and it's the best thing on the island for seeing how people here live. You walk dirt tracks between smallholdings, flat to gently rolling, with a guide who knows everybody you pass. Families let you into their yards to see what they're doing that day, and you'll be handed fruit off the tree more than once. Volcán Concepción sits over all of it. There's a lot of standing about and sitting down in those five hours, so it asks less of you than the clock suggests. This is a working island going about its week, and you walk through the middle of it.

Sintiope, next to Caravan Hostel, Isla de Ometepe

map↗ · Volcancito's own base at Sintiope, next to Caravan Hostel, where the tour starts

11.5300656, -85.582517

Watch out: Prices and durations are published on the operator's site and given above. Confirm the current terrain and walking distances before you book.

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Ojo de Agua Natural Pool*** **NO BOOKING NEEDED · BOOKING CARD p. 75 ›**

CAD 13.93 per person · About 2 to 3 hours, or half a day if you settle in. · Before 10:00 or after 15:00, either side of the tour-group hours. Paid at the gate, 10 US dollars a person, about CAD 13.93.

A natural freshwater spring pool near Altagracia, popular for a relaxed swim. A restful half-day outing. A natural swimming hole, not a hike, and a good complement to a week built mostly around gentler activities.

Two spring pools sit in a clearing under big trees, fed from below by water coming off Concepción, and it's clear and cold and always moving. The big pool is deep enough to swim properly and there's a rope swing at one end. The bottom is stone and a bit slippery, and the steps in are shallow with a rail beside them. There are loungers, hammocks strung between the trunks, and a small kitchen doing simple plates and fresh juice around the edge of the pools. Go before ten or after three. It fills up with tour groups through the middle of the day and empties out again after. The road in from Santo Domingo is rough, so allow more time than the distance suggests.

On the Altagracia to Santo Domingo road, Isla de Ometepe

map↗

11.5190588, -85.5669624

Watch out: The pool is deep enough to swim, the stone underfoot is slippery, there is a rope swing, and nobody is on lifeguard duty, so treat it as wild swimming, not a supervised pool. Its opening hours and prices are not confirmed, and it has a Facebook page but no website of its own, so check before you go.

One to avoid

The full summit hikes up Volcán Maderas or Volcán Concepción are not recommended for this stay. Both are steep, multi-hour ascents. Global Affairs Canada's advice for Nicaragua tells Canadians to buy travel insurance that includes helicopter rescue and medical evacuation, and to use a local guide on the Maderas and Concepción volcanoes specifically. It is the same kind of judgment call as the Acatenango flag at Antigua.

Eating

On Ometepe, where you eat is settled by where you sleep. The island is large, most of the road network outside the main corridor is unpaved, and you cannot pop across to another village for dinner. Your base is on the Santa Cruz isthmus, so the walkable options are the isthmus ones. Moyogalpa, the ferry port, has the widest choice on the island and is a taxi or the island bus away. Balgüe at the Maderas end has the places longer-stay travellers keep going back to. Altagracia, the other ferry town, is the most ordinarily Nicaraguan of the three: a working town.

The food is Nicaraguan at the local end with a scattering of international at the traveller-facing places. Ometepe has the fewest places to eat of any base on the trip. A seven-night stay here means repeating places, which is normal on the island.

Typical is comida corriente at the local end.

On timing, this is small-town Nicaragua, so kitchens close around nine, not eleven as in Granada. Lunch is still the main meal. Plan the evening meal before you are hungry, because the fallback is a long dark road, not the next place along.

Getting around Isla de Ometepe

Don't drive here: of all the bases on this trip, this is the worst for it.

- **Why not:** Much of the island's road network outside the main Moyogalpa to Altagracia corridor is unpaved, some stretches have no public transport backup at all, and the rental fleet runs to old Toyotas and Suzukis.
- **What to do instead:** Hotel-arranged transfers, plus a hired driver for the one or two outings that need one. Not a rental car, and not the hourly bus network as your sole means of getting around.
- **Agree the fare first:** There is no ride-hailing app on the island and no meter in any taxi.
- **Arranging a driver:** Through https://volcancito-adventure.com/en/ or through your hotel, which is usually simpler.

> **Hotel-arranged transfer**
> Ferry dock ↔ accommodation. Arrange directly with hotel. The right call for arrival/departure with luggage.

> **Taxi**
> For most trips off-property. Negotiated cash, no meter, "drivers will swarm you as soon as you step off the boat", expect this and negotiate before getting in. Moyogalpa dock to the isthmus is about US$25, roughly CAD 35.

> **Island bus**
> Moyogalpa ↔ Altagracia corridor only. Hourly on the main route; approx. $0.23–1.53 CAD; collapses on Sundays. Do not rely on it for a Sunday movement.

> **Hired driver / day-trip transport**
> For any day trip beyond walking distance. Arranged per outing. The practical default for this island.

> **Isla de Ometepe essentials at a glance**
> Serious care is off the island. • **Healthcare. Day-to-day:** One small hospital and two clinics in Moyogalpa, described as fine for routine care, dental work and prescriptions. A smaller health centre exists in Altagracia. • **Healthcare. Serious care:** Anything serious means the ferry to San Jorge and then a roughly two-hour drive to Hospital Vivian Pellas in Managua. Plan three hours minimum, and longer if wind has cancelled the ferry. On Ometepe, emergency transfer to serious care is by ferry, and wind can close that path entirely for part of a day. Practical implication for this stay: before this leg of the trip, phone your travel insurer and confirm two things: (a) whether the policy covers helicopter or air evacuation from an island with no scheduled air service, and (b) whether their assistance line can coordinate or authorize a private boat crossing in an emergency. Do not rely on the policy wording. Money. There are no reliable banks on the island. The ATMs in Moyogalpa are reported to reject some foreign cards, Maestro-linked ones among them, and a local shop offers cash advances on Visa/Mastercard at "an extremely large fee." Withdraw enough cash in Rivas or Granada before crossing to the island. Healthcare here is pay first, reclaim later, so arriving cash-light is an avoidable risk. • **Insurance pattern:** Same cash-pay-and-reclaim pattern as Granada and Copán. Keep every receipt, and call the insurer's line before or immediately after any treatment. • **Language:** The weakest English environment of the six bases. A handful of yoga hostels in Balgüe and some restaurants in Santa Cruz operate in English; everywhere else, functional Spanish (or booking accommodation whose staff can act as intermediary for taxis and clinics) helps more than anywhere else on the trip. • **Noise note:** Howler monkeys start around 5am island-wide. They are loud in forested areas, and choosing a different village does not avoid them; only lodging away from the forest edge does (neither pick above is confirmed clear of it, so expect to hear them). • **Emergency numbers (Nicaragua, national):** Police 118 · Medical assistance 128 · Firefighters 115. Nicaragua has no working general emergency number. Neither 911 nor 112 is reliably answered here, so dial the specific service you need (Government of Canada country page, read 31 August 2026). On the island, Hospital Moyogalpa can be reached directly at +505 2569-4247, and the Altagracia health centre at +505 2552-6089. Save both in your phone before arrival, since the national numbers still route you through the same limited island infrastructure. Dated watchouts for this stay: No Ometepe-specific festival conflicts were found for 21 to 27 January. The main risk for this window is the ferry-and-wind dependency described above, not a calendar event. Treat both ferry crossings, arrival and departure, as the fixed points of this leg.

OPTIONAL READING *More places, if you have the time and the energy.*

More to see and do

Nothing here needs booking ahead. Santa Cruz has a few kitchens within walking distance of both picks, so most evenings do not involve a road after dark.

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Do	Little Concepción Trail & Viewpoint	Sintiope, at Volcancito's own premises	A short, self-guided trail through tropical vegetation with panoramic views of both volcanoes and the isthmus.	map↗ · The trail entrance and pay point at Volcancito's own premises at Sintiope 11.5300656, -85.582517
Tour	Hiking to San Ramón Waterfall	Ometepe Biological Field Station, at the foot of the trail	A guided hike to a waterfall on the Maderas side of the island, with a swim at the base.	map↗ · The Ometepe Biological Field Station, the ticket point at the foot of the trail 11.4162999, -85.5398165
Tour	Kayaking Excursion Rio Istiam	Rio Istiam, the isthmus	Volcancito runs a paddle on the Istiam channel and lake, on sheltered water: US$20 a person for two or more, about CAD 28, not in the budget. Ask by email/WhatsApp +505 8858 0785	map↗ · The Mérida shore, the usual put-in for Rio Istiam paddles. Exact point not confirmed. ,
Tour	Ometepe Island Day Tour	Island-wide	Volcancito's sightseeing circuit around the island taking in ancient sites and wildlife. Ask by email/WhatsApp; no price published	Location not confirmed. Hotel pick-up, arranged individually with the operator.
Do	Charco Verde	Ometepe	Named as one of the two gentlest, best-fit Ometepe sites. Entry is about NIO 175 a person, about CAD 7, from two traveller sources. Hours and exact location are not published, so ask Volcancito on +505 8858 0785	map↗ · The reserve entrance at San José del Sur on the south-shore road. 11.4801714, -85.635105
Do	Santa Cruz isthmus beaches	Santa Cruz	Lake on both sides of the isthmus: sunrise from one beach, sunset from the other, 12 min apart. Walk-in	map↗ · The Santa Cruz village junction, where the beach stretch begins. Exact point not confirmed. ,
Do	Playa Santo Domingo	Santo Domingo, the isthmus	The island's main beach strip, about 25 km from Moyogalpa port by pickup taxi (about US$25, about CAD 35, for the car). Walk-in; taxi from the ferry	map↗ · The beach along the isthmus road; no gate and several ways on. Exact point not confirmed. ,
Do	Altagracia	Altagracia	Sleepy second ferry town with an Intur office on the plaza; a real Nicaraguan town, not an enclave. Walk-in; Intur open weekdays 9-13, 15-17	map↗ · The town's central park. 11.5658945, -85.5786048

More on this area: Nicaragua's tourism promotion site. Ometepe, nature reserves and island activity listings. Visit Nicaragua

Base 6: San Juan del Sur · 5 nights

Contents



San Juan del Sur's bay, seen from the Cristo de la Misericordia



The San Juan del Sur coastline, Nicaragua



Looking out over San Juan del Sur's headland

San Juan del Sur at a glance	
YOUR DATES	28 Jan to 2 Feb · 5 nights
HOW THE STAY RUNS	A deliberate wind-down: transfer in, a light day, then the two anchors, the Cristo climb and a beach day at Playa El Remanso, spaced apart, closing on a pack-and-rest day.
WHERE YOU STAY	**HC Liri Hotel** · if that one is gone: **VillaKachimba**
GETTING HERE	**Isla de Ometepe → San Juan del Sur** 28 Jan
GETTING HOME	**San Juan del Sur → Managua airport** 2 Feb **Managua → Vancouver** 2 Feb
TO BOOK FOR THIS STOP	**Isla de Ometepe → San Juan del Sur** BOOK NOW **HC Liri Hotel** BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY **Cristo de la Misericordia** NO BOOKING NEEDED **Beach day at Playa El Remanso** NO BOOKING NEEDED **San Juan del Sur → Managua airport** BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY **Managua → Vancouver** BOOK NOW
BOOKING CARDS	**Booking cards for San Juan del Sur** (p. 76)

San Juan del Sur: the trip's wind-down

San Juan del Sur is the trip's wind-down: a half-moon Pacific bay between two headlands, and the most foreigner-oriented, most commercialized town on the whole route. It is the Nicaraguan Pacific's party town and the busiest stop on this trip: December through April brings restaurant lineups and a bar scene most nights. For five nights at the very end of a 51-night trip, it works because it is the easiest place in the region to function. English is spoken everywhere, the town is compact and walkable, and the accommodation below sits a short walk outside the party strip, away from the noise. A beach, good seafood, a hilltop statue with a view, and not much more asked of you after more than six weeks on the road.

Getting to your base

The last inter-base move, off the island and down to the Pacific. No operator sells the ferry and the road leg together, so time the two halves as one journey. The Iskra Travel car waits at San Jorge for whichever ferry you take, so only the crossing runs to the clock.

GETTING THERE **Isla de Ometepe → San Juan del Sur** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 76 ›

map↗ · collection from your own gate at El Encanto, Santa Cruz, by a hotel-arranged taxi to the Moyogalpa dock. The return ferry crossing lands at Puerto San Jorge

11.4884437, -85.5421471

28 Jan

The last inter-base move: a taxi to the Moyogalpa dock, the ferry to San Jorge, then a car and driver south. No operator sells it end to end, so book the two halves separately and time them together.

Watch out: Timing is tight on this leg only if you fall back on the shared shuttles: Ocean Fly Nicaragua's weekday run leaves San Jorge between 11:30 and 13:00, with the exact time confirmed the day before on their own page, and Gekko Trails runs at 14:30 daily (both read 28 Aug 2026). The Iskra Travel car recommended here, with booking details on its card in Your Booking Guide, has no window: it waits for your ferry. Take a Moyogalpa sailing no later than the 10:00, which puts you at San Jorge around 11:00 with room to spare. If you miss both shuttles, take a taxi at the port. Taxis usually wait at the port, though none is guaranteed to meet a given sailing, and no booking is needed. At roughly US$20 to US$30 for the car, about CAD 28 to CAD 42, it is cheaper than either arranged option. What you give up is a fixed price agreed in advance and a driver expecting you by name, so keep it as the fallback.

The one non-negotiable siting decision

As with Granada, location is the one fixed decision here. Downtown San Juan del Sur, the bay-front grid with the boardwalk and the restaurant row, is the town's centre and its loudest quarter after dark. Two independent sources say the music makes sleep difficult, and December to April, which covers your dates, adds a Sunday party circuit. So this Blueprint books you north of the river, off the bar strip, where most of the town's short-term rentals sit. From the hotel, the walk to the restaurant strip is flat, along the beach and across the bridge.

Arrival and settling in

- **Getting your bearings:** the river splits San Juan del Sur. Everything happens south of it: the boardwalk, restaurant row, the banks, the taxis and the market. Most of the rentals, including yours, sit north of it. The bay is west, the hills are east, and the walk between the two halves is five to ten minutes, flat along the beach and across the bridge, and uphill only from the streets further inland.
- **Within five minutes' walk:** from a north-of-river door, limited. Cross the river and you are in the middle of everything.
- **Money and everyday shopping:** the banks, the ATMs and the market are all south of the river, the market doubling as the main bus stop. Taxis are cash, negotiated, no meters, roughly US$2 to US$3 in town, about CAD 3 to CAD 4.
- **Heat and noise:** nights stay around 24 degrees Celsius, so the air conditioning matters. You stay on this side to avoid the bar noise south of the river.

Where to stay

Book north of the river. Most of the short-term rentals are there, it is off the bar strip, and the flat bayfront stays walkable. Downtown is the noisiest place anywhere on this trip, and two independent sources say so.

NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHERE IN TOWN, AND WHAT EACH ONE IS LIKE

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
North of the river RECOMMENDED Off the bar strip and quieter, and still walkable to town.	Walkable into town: flat along the beach and across the bridge, with a hill only from the streets further inland.	Limited. The bars, restaurants, shops, taxis and banks are all south of the river.	Walk down into town. Buses to Rivas leave the market every 45 minutes, 5am to 5.30pm. Search around Avenida El Pargo and the blocks behind the Gato Negro coffee shop.	**Mid.** Where most of the town's short-term rentals and Airbnbs sit.

Area	Ground underfoot	On the doorstep	Getting out	What's here & price position
Downtown, south of the river After dark the bar scene gets loud enough that music makes sleep difficult, and December to April adds a Sunday party circuit.	The flat crescent of the bay, hills behind. Best flat walking of the Nicaraguan bases after Granada.	The boardwalk, restaurant row, the banks, the taxis, the market and the bus stop.	The transport centre. Taxis concentrate here, Rivas buses leave the market, Liberia shuttles collect here. Search along the bayfront paseo and the market blocks behind it.	**Above average.** Hotels and rentals on the bay itself, priced for the boardwalk they sit beside.
La Talanguera, Colinas de Miramar, Camino del Sol The named quiet neighbourhoods, well away from the strip. Over five nights, a taxi for every dinner.	Hillside and edge-of-bay, five minutes above town by vehicle. Walkable, but uphill.	Nothing. Residential and condo neighbourhoods, so every meal and errand is a trip into town.	Taxi or shuttle every time. No ride-hailing app here, so cash fares, negotiated, US$2 to US$3, about CAD 3 to CAD 4. Search along the Camino del Sol hillside road.	**Above average.** Managed condo and villa inventory with ocean views, the tier the local agencies are built around.
Marsella Clear of the town's noise and the surf-camp dust up the road. Residential; a taxi for every outing.	A small bay halfway out the road toward Playa Maderas.	Four restaurants in a residential area.	A taxi into town for anything those four do not cover. Not walking distance to the bayfront. Search along the Playa Marsella road, off the Playa Maderas highway.	**Mid.** Small beach-side properties and residential rentals, away from the town's pricing.

Two independent sources say the music downtown makes sleep difficult, and your five nights fall inside the season they describe.

Ask any property two things. Does the air conditioning run quietly, since in this heat and humidity it will be running? Are there window screens, so you can open the windows instead of running it all night?

Five nights is short enough that the walk in matters, so this points you north of the river, not up the hill.

WHERE WE WOULD BOOK, AND WHY IN THIS ORDER

Property	Neighbourhood	What it is	Roughly	Why it sits here	Where to book
HC Liri Hotel RECOMMENDED BOOKING CARD (p. 76) map↗ · the entrance north of the river, facing the beach across the bridge 11.2602778, -85.8744444	North of the river	A small hotel facing the beach on the quiet side of the river, a walk across the bridge from the town's restaurants and a long way from its bars.	**CAD 634** CAD 126.80 a night	This chapter calls downtown the worst noise environment on the trip. This hotel is across the bridge on the north side, away from all of it, with air conditioning for nights around 24 degrees and 382 reviews behind it.	Booking.com
VillaKachimba ALTERNATE BOOKING CARD (p. 77) map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in San Juan del Sur. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. approximate: 11.25253, -85.8702	Downtown, south of the river	An entire open-plan studio downtown: two queens in one room, air conditioning, full kitchen. It sits above the host's restaurant, open evenings 4 to 10 except Tuesdays, and declares no CO alarm (read 28 Aug 2026).	**CAD 489** CAD 97.80 a night	CAD 145 cheaper, with a kitchen and free cancellation. It is also the only property on this whole trip that declares a smoke alarm. Across all six bases, almost nothing rents with a smoke or carbon-monoxide alarm, and gas water heaters are the standard fixture in all three countries. The gap is regional, and the arrival checklist in your Prep Guide tells you what to look for and what to do when there is nothing to find. It is better on every count but one: it is downtown, south of the river, in the strip this chapter calls the loudest place on the route.	Airbnb

Each of the two has a booking card in Part 6, with the contact, the rate and space to write down what you reserved. We have not held dates on either.

WHERE YOU STAY **HC Liri Hotel** BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY · BOOKING CARD p. 76 ›

map↗ · the entrance north of the river, facing the beach across the bridge

11.2602778, -85.8744444

28 Jan to 2 Feb 2027

A beachfront hotel across the bridge on the north side, with air conditioned rooms, a pool and breakfast included.

Watch out: THIS BOOKING IS NON-REFUNDABLE AND YOU PAY BEFORE ARRIVAL. It is the only one of your six base stays without free cancellation, so do not book it until your dates are certain. The full price is CAD 634: Booking.com shows CAD 551 and adds CAD 83 in taxes and fees. There is no kitchen across the five nights, and breakfast is included. Your check-in day, 28 January, is the same day as the wind-cancellable ferry off Ometepe, in the windiest weeks of the year. So hold this booking back as late as your dates allow, and if the lake closes that morning, phone the hotel at once. You will still owe the missed night, about CAD 127, which is the worst case, and many properties will shift a paid night given same-day notice. The refundable alternative, VillaKachimba, does not solve this: its free-cancellation window closes on 29 December 2026, a month before the night in question, so by late January it is non-refundable too.

KINDS OF PLACE	Managed vacation rentals · Airbnb apartments and houses · Hillside condo units · Hotels and jungle lodges
WHERE TO SEARCH	SEARCH **San Juan del Sur Vacation Rentals** The deepest local inventory, 99 listings, and the source of the named quiet neighbourhoods. One-bedroom units for two do exist in it. Rates come on enquiry, not on the listing, so write first, and say in that first message that you want to be off the bay-front grid. SEARCH **Airbnb** Stock sits on both sides of the river, and more of it is downtown than north of it, so filter by area. North of the river is the quieter side. Five nights earns no discount, so compare it straight against the local agency.
ARRIVING BY CAR	No car needed. The bayfront is flat, taxis run US$2 to US$3, about CAD 3 to CAD 4, and the Iskra Travel car in from the Ometepe ferry delivers to your door.

What to do

Five nights at the end of seven weeks calls for little structure, so this base's activity list is the shortest of the six.

What to do: the anchor & the must-books FULL DETAIL · BOOKING CARDS IN PART 6

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Cristo de la Misericordia*** NO BOOKING NEEDED · BOOKING CARD p. 77 ›

CAD 2.79 per person · About 1.5 to 2 hours return from town, including time at the top. · Late afternoon for the light, or early morning to be off the trail before the heat. Leave enough daylight for the walk down. Foreign visitors pay 2 US dollars a person at the top, about CAD 2.79.

A 15-metre statue on a hilltop above town, reached by a walking trail with a stair section, with panoramic views over the bay. The best view on this base. A moderate walk, not a strenuous hike; go late afternoon or early morning because of the heat.

The trail goes up from the north end of the bay, part packed dirt and part concrete stairs, with a handrail on the steepest bit. It's twenty to thirty minutes of continuous uphill with almost no shade, so go early morning or late afternoon, not midday. The statue is 15 metres tall and much bigger up close than it looks from the beach. From the top you get the whole horseshoe of the bay, the fishing boats below, and the Pacific opening out west. Sunset is the obvious time and also the busiest. Leave enough daylight for the way down; don't walk that trail in the dark.

El Nacascolo, the north headland, San Juan del Sur

map↗ · The statue on the north headland; vehicle access is through the Pacific Marlin development and the last stretch is on foot

11.2619448, -85.8817665

Watch out: Warm climbing in full Pacific sun by mid-morning. Go early or late, bring water, and make it the day's only activity.

Also worth finding

ANCHOR ACTIVITY ***Beach day at Playa El Remanso*** NO BOOKING NEEDED · BOOKING CARD p. 77 ›

CAD 9.75 to CAD 16.72 per person · Half a day at either, or a full day if you want both. · Any day of the week. Remanso is calmest in the morning, and the light at Hermosa is better late in the afternoon. The beaches themselves are free. This is the round-trip beach shuttle per person, the higher figure being Playa Hermosa, which includes its beach access fee.

The calmest swimming beach near town, a short ride south. A rest day of swimming and sunbathing, with no surf break. Playa Hermosa, a longer and quieter sweep further down the same road, is in the table below with its own directions.

Remanso is a small cove with rock at both ends and a headland that takes the swell out of the water, so it comes in flat and warm. There's a bar back under the trees where somebody will bring you a plate and a cold bottle, and you could sit there all afternoon. Hermosa is the opposite in scale. A long grey-gold sweep where you can walk twenty minutes and pass only a few people. Both sit down a rough dirt road south of town, ten to fifteen minutes by taxi, and neither has much beyond a couple of simple places to eat. Take a hat, and take more water than you think you need. Once you're clear of the trees there's no shade at either.

Playa El Remanso and Playa Hermosa, south of town off the Ostional road, San Juan del Sur
map↗

approximate: 11.2332957, -85.8414141

Watch out: Take care in the water, even on a calm day. This is the open Pacific, and Canadian government advice for Nicaragua warns that riptides are common on this coast and drownings happen regularly (read 28 Aug 2026). Remanso's headland takes most of the swell out, which is why it is the swim beach, but stay inside the cove, keep to depths you can stand in, and treat Hermosa as a walking beach, not a swimming one. No lifeguard is on duty, so ask locally which end is safe on the day, because it changes with the swell. If you are caught in a current, this is the sequence, in the US National Weather Service's own words: relax, rip currents do not pull you under; do not try to swim against it, because that only uses up your energy; swim along the shoreline until you are out of the pull, then in. If you cannot reach shore, relax, face the shore, and call or wave for help.

On the turtle-nesting question: a direct flag, not an activity card
The olive-ridley turtle arribada at Refugio de Vida Silvestre La Flor, south of town, runs roughly July to January, peaking September to November, with some nesting reported into February. Your San Juan del Sur nights (28 January to 1 February) fall at the tail: a mass arribada is unlikely, but hatchlings from late-season nests, which emerge about 45 to 50 days after laying, are the likelier sight. No official source publishes the 2026–27 nesting calendar. Do not count on turtle nesting for this trip without confirming directly with a licensed local operator or MARENA closer to travel dates. If the season has closed by late January, there will be nothing to see, and no refund if a paid tour is booked speculatively.

Booking a day out from here
Mono Loco Adventures, whom you meet at Granada, run day tours from León, Granada and Matagalpa and do not operate out of San Juan del Sur. Day trips from here are arranged locally, through your accommodation or the operators along the malecon, and are priced on the day. We have not verified an operator here, so treat any quote as a starting point, not a rate we have checked. If you want a specific outing beyond the two above, ask your hotel to name an operator, then email or **WhatsApp** that operator for its current catalogue and prices.

Eating

San Juan del Sur eats on its beachfront. The strip along the bay holds most of it, with a handful of places inland on the central streets around the church. The bay is a working fishing beach as well as a tourist one, which is why the fish is good.

Seafood dominates, more than at any other base, alongside a café culture with several places roasting their own coffee. The mix is narrower than Granada's and more visitor-facing.

Unlike everywhere else on this trip, menus here quote in US dollars, not córdobas.

On timing, small-town Nicaragua again, so kitchens close around nine. Lunch remains the main meal nationally, though on this strip the evening is the busier service.

The market sits south of the river, doubling as the main bus stop, and is the obvious place for cheaper, more local eating. Inside it is a row of small comedores at shared tables; Comedor Clementina there is one of the cheapest sit-down meals in town.

Getting around San Juan del Sur

Don't drive here. Downtown is fully walkable, and the Rivas connection runs every 45 minutes for about US$1, roughly CAD 1.40.

- **The beach roads:** The road to the outlying surf beaches “needs 4WD in October”. A standard rental car is a liability on it. Hire a taxi or a driver for the one or two beach days instead.
- **Agree the fare first:** InDrive and Aventón do not operate here. Granada and Managua are the only two Nicaraguan cities where they do, so every taxi ride in San Juan del Sur is a negotiated cash fare.
- **Booked online:** The airport transfer at **https://iskratravel.com/airport-transportation**. Day trips here are arranged locally, not online.

> **Walking**
> Downtown, boardwalk, most restaurants. Free. Downtown itself is compact and fully walkable.

> **Taxi**
> North of the river to downtown, and beach trips. Negotiated cash, no meters, roughly US$2 to US$3, about CAD 3 to CAD 4. Confirm the fare before getting in.

> **Rivas ↔ San Juan del Sur bus**
> Any Rivas trip (hospital, onward connections) (roughly US$1, about CAD 1.40, every 45 minutes, 5am–5:30pm), the regional workhorse.

> **San Juan del Sur essentials at a glance**
> • **Healthcare:** Rivas is the regional hospital town, about 30 minutes away. A taxi runs roughly US$20 to US$25 for the car each way, about CAD 28 to CAD 35. This is closer and simpler than Ometepe's ferry-dependent path, and closer than Copán, where the nearest properly equipped hospital is 2.5 to 3 hours away. The easiest healthcare access of the trip's back half. · Insurance pattern: same cash-pay-and-reclaim pattern as the rest of Nicaragua. Keep receipts, call the insurer's line before or immediately after treatment. · Money: San Juan del Sur has banking services and ATMs in town, no cash-access flag here, unlike Ometepe. · Language: the easiest English environment of the trip. English is spoken at the bakery, the beach, most restaurants and most accommodation. A change of pace from Xalteva's Spanish-first streets in Granada or Ometepe's near-total Spanish immersion. · Climate reminder: warm and coastal. Daily highs around 28–29°C, and noticeably wetter in late January than Granada despite being only two hours away (the Pacific coast holds its wet season longer than the lake basin). Pack a light rain layer for the first few days of this stay, even though the trip is otherwise well into the dry stretch. · Noise reality check, one more time: downtown San Juan del Sur is loud after dark in season. North of the river avoids it; anywhere on the bay-front grid does not. · Emergency numbers (Nicaragua, national): Police 118 · Medical assistance 128 · Firefighters 115. Nicaragua has no working general emergency number. Neither 911 nor 112 is reliably answered here, so dial the specific service you need (Government of Canada country page, read 31 August 2026). · Dated watchouts for this stay: no festival specific to San Juan del Sur was confirmed for 28 January to 1 February. This window sits safely after the loudest Nicaraguan holiday cluster (Dec 25–Jan 1) and before Valentine's Day observance. The turtle-nesting flag above is the one date-sensitive item to confirm before travel.

Getting home

The trip ends the way it began, with a long travel day. The transfer to Managua and the flight out are written up here rather than in a chapter of their own.

GETTING THERE **San Juan del Sur → Managua airport** BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY · BOOKING CARD p. 78 ›

map↗ · collection from your own door at HC Liri, San Juan del Sur
11.2602778, -85.8744444
2 Feb

The last ground transfer, door to door from your San Juan del Sur address to Managua airport. A dedicated airport-transfer operator, not a general shuttle, because arriving late on this leg means a missed flight.

Watch out: The 06:00 pickup is set by your flight: it leaves Managua at 11:50, the road run is about two and a half hours, and an international departure wants three hours at the airport. It is also earlier than the hotel's breakfast, so arrange a packed one or eat the night before. Build buffer between this transfer and your flight time: Managua traffic and border-adjacent road conditions are not the place to cut it close on departure day.

FLIGHT **Managua → Vancouver** BOOK NOW · BOOKING CARD p. 78 ›

map↗ · departures at Augusto Cesar Sandino, Managua
12.1444609, -86.1710823
2 Feb

The flight home, out of Managua, not Guatemala City, on a one-way ticket, not a return. One Avianca ticket takes you home, Miami then an Air Canada-operated leg, landing in Vancouver the same evening.

Watch out: With a long day's travel and an already-long trip behind you, do not schedule anything demanding on departure day itself. The San Juan del Sur to Managua ground transfer plus a one-stop flight is enough for one day.

OPTIONAL READING *More places, if you have the time and the energy.*

More to see and do

Sunset on your dates is about 5:45pm, so golden hour runs roughly 5 to 5:45pm. For the sunset spots below, arrive about half an hour early.

Type	Name	Neighbourhood	Why	Find it
Tour	Refugio de Vida Silvestre La Flor	South of San Juan del Sur	Turtle-nesting refuge south of town. Nesting runs roughly July to January and sometimes into February, peaking September to November, and shifts from mass arrivals toward hatching from November on. Your window is the tail of the season, so expect hatchlings, not an arribada. Verified 11 Aug 2026.	map↗ · The refuge entrance, about 25 km southeast of town on the unpaved coast road 11.1444741, -85.7911679
Do	Playa Maderas	20 minutes north of town	Beach break with three beach-shack restaurants and a yoga deck; 4WD road or the Casa Oro shuttle. Hostel beach shuttle or taxi	map↗ · The beach access at the end of the road down from Marsella. 11.29276, -85.909698
Do	Marsella	Halfway to Playa Maderas	Small bay with four restaurants and a residential rhythm, with neither town noise nor Maderas dust. Taxi from town	map↗ · Playa Marsella, at the end of the Marsella access road. Exact point not confirmed. ,
Do	San Juan del Sur bay and boardwalk	Downtown, south of the river	Flat half-moon bay and boardwalk, the best level walking here; the bay is for sailboats, not surf. Walk-in	map↗ · The malecon, mid-strand where the town grid meets the sand. Exact point not confirmed. ,
Do	Playa Hermosa	South of town, off the Ostional road	A long open sweep of sand about 2.5 km beyond El Remanso, quieter and better for a walk than for a swim. A per-person beach fee is usually charged at the entrance road.	map↗ · The beach access off the Ostional road, where the fee is collected. Exact point not confirmed. ,

More on this area: Nicaragua's tourism promotion site. Pacific-coast beaches and San Juan del Sur listings. Visit Nicaragua

PART 3

Getting there, and getting between

Contents

Transport strategy

This is a logistically busy trip: fifty-one nights across six bases in three countries, with five moves between bases, plus the flights and airport transfers that open, close and link them. Two of those nights are beside Guatemala City's airport, not at a base: the night you land, because the recommended flights all land late in the evening, and the January night between the Copán shuttle and the Managua flight. Both are booked at the same small hotel, a kilometre from the terminal. Every leg on this route has no more than one connection, and most ground moves are shared shuttles booked a few days ahead; none needs a rental car. Two move days are hard work, the Antigua→Copán border crossing and the Copán→Granada return. This Blueprint treats both as full-day events with no sightseeing alongside. Each base chapter carries the full card for the leg that gets you there.

Booking timing and the recovery pattern

- **When to book what:** one call to your travel insurer first, then the flights. The flights set everything else and they are the one thing here with a moving price. The usual pattern is to watch a route and book a flexible fare two to four months out, and four to eight months when you are flying into a peak. Mid-December into Central America is a peak, and you leave on 13 December 2026, so you are already inside that window. The flights should not wait.

Why the insurer call comes before the flights: four parts of this trip turn on knowing exactly what your policy covers: Copán, Ometepe, the Pacaya or Acatenango question at Antigua, and whether volcanic disruption to a flight is a covered reason for delay or missed connection. Ask that last one in the same call: Fuego closed Guatemala City's airport for short periods during its August 2026 episode, and both your Guatemala flights route through it. After the flights, follow the order in the Prep Guide's schedule. First the two shuttle legs that run once a day and can sell out: the El Florido border crossing from Antigua to Copán, and the Copán Ruinas to Guatemala City run. Then accommodation. Then the two cars with drivers in Nicaragua, Granada to San Jorge and San Jorge to San Juan del Sur. Neither is hard to get, but book both with a name and a time instead of negotiating at the curb. Last, the three tours at the end of the first group in the booking list: the Antigua walking tour, the Pacaya hike and the Authentic Ometepe Tour. Luna Jaguar hot springs at Copán, if you want it, also caps numbers and takes payment up front, so book it once the Copán dates are firm. Nothing else on this trip gains from booking early, and several things are cheaper and easier to arrange on the ground.

- **If a leg fails:** three legs have no casual second option.

- **Antigua to Copán:** the crossing runs once a day at 03:30, Monday to Saturday. Four sellers list it at four different prices, two of them one business under two names, but all four quote the same 03:30 slot, which strongly suggests they resell one consolidated vehicle. Booking a different company is not a fallback here; a private transfer is, and it is worth pricing anyway. Either way this is a hard morning: the 03:30 departure means about five to six hours door to door on the operator's own schedule, border stop included. When we first sketched this route we assumed the crossing ran in daylight; the actual service leaves in the dark. Global Affairs Canada lists CA-11 at the El Florido border under avoid non-essential travel, and separately tells Canadians to avoid travelling after dark, once for border crossings and again for road travel generally (Government of Canada country page for Guatemala, read 31 August 2026). A 03:30 departure in early January means roughly three hours on the road before first light, in exchange for reaching Copán by mid-morning with the border behind you. The private cross-border car leaves later and puts the whole run in daylight, which is why we recommend pricing it. We cannot tell you the shared 03:30 shuttle is safe. It is your call, made with the same information we have.

• **Granada to Ometepe:** the crossing can be closed by wind, and late January sits inside the windiest stretch of the year on the lake. The decision is usually taken on the morning itself, not the day before, so it is a same-day question for the port or your hotel. • **Closures escalate:** the small lanchas are stood down first and the large ferries keep running for a while, so on a marginal day take a big ferry. The crossing itself is frequent, roughly fourteen sailings a day from San Jorge, so the risk is the weather, not a missed boat. Your bookings leave no spare day around this crossing, so take the earliest big ferry you can and put nothing time-critical immediately after it.

Ometepe to San Juan del Sur: your Iskra Travel car and driver meets you at San Jorge. • **Work backwards:** take a Moyogalpa sailing no later than 10:00 and you land with room to spare. If that plan fails, taxis usually wait at San Jorge for each arriving ferry and cost less, but no car is guaranteed at any given sailing, the fare is not agreed in advance, and a taxi off the dock is not a car you arranged. Call Iskra Travel or your San Juan del Sur hotel first, and keep the dock taxi as the last fallback.

Don't rely on the direct Granada to Altagracia sailing you may see mentioned online. It has not run since 2023, when low lake levels suspended it, and nothing suggests a restart (checked 28 Aug 2026). Even when it existed it landed at a port neither property collects from.

International flights

The two long-haul legs that open and close the trip. The full times, fares, baggage rules and booking instructions live on the two flight cards in Your Booking Guide, and the money side is in Part 4's movement table. This section holds only the strategy.

Airport transfers

The two ground transfers that bookend the trip's international flights. The bookable detail for each sits on its own card in Your Booking Guide at the back.

Inter-base legs

These are the five moves between your bases, plus the run in from Guatemala City's airport that starts the trip. Each base opens with a “Getting to your base” card covering the leg that brings you in, and Your Booking Guide at the back carries a booking card for each.

Local transport systems: trip-wide patterns

A few things hold true across every base on this trip, so they are set out once here.

> **Ride-hailing only around Guatemala City, Managua and Granada**
> InDrive and Aventón are the only ride-hailing apps operating anywhere in Nicaragua, and only in Managua and Granada. Everywhere else in Nicaragua, and at Panajachel and Copán Ruinas, taxis are cash, negotiated, and unmetered. Antigua is a partial exception: Uber drivers from Guatemala City take trips to and from it, as its chapter explains. Agree the fare before getting in, every time: that protects your money. Arrange the car instead of taking one off the street, through your hotel or host, or InDrive in the two cities it runs in: that protects you, and it is the habit on the quick-reference card.

> **"Don't drive here" is the standing recommendation at every single base**
> None of the six stops on this trip has a self-drive recommendation. On Isla de Ometepe a hired driver for specific day trips is worth considering, but even there a self-drive rental is discouraged given the unpaved road network. Walking, shared shuttles, taxis and pre-booked transfers cover everything this Blueprint recommends.

> **Border-crossing cash needs**
> The Guatemala to Honduras crossing at El Florido, on the move from Antigua to Copán, carries a Honduras entry fee whose official tariff is US$3 cash per person, about CAD 4 (Government of Canada, **travel.gc.ca** Honduras, page updated 21 August 2026, read 28 August 2026). The booth commonly collects up to US$5, about CAD 7, and your budget funds it at that. Carry US$10 for two, about CAD 14, in small bills: a border post is not the place to need change or a card machine. The second fee is not at a land border, which makes it easy to miss: Nicaragua charges a US$10 tourist card per person, about CAD 14, cash US dollars, at Managua immigration when you fly in on 8 January. That is US$20 for the two of you, about CAD 28, again in small bills. Both fees are funded in your budget. Set aside the US$30 in cash, about CAD 42, from the start of the trip, separate from spending money, because both moments come after a long travel day.

PART 4

Money

Contents

What this trip costs

All figures are in Canadian dollars, for the two of you together. Every price in this Blueprint was researched in August 2026, and none has been updated since, so check each one again before you book. Three tables follow: what the whole trip costs, what each stop costs, and what the travel between stops costs.

BUDGET, ALL FIGURES IN CANADIAN DOLLARS

Category	Item	CAD	Note
Flights	Three legs for the two of you, bags in (the return bag is a published range; this carries its midpoint)	$5,747.06	Vancouver to Guatemala City, Guatemala City to Managua, and Managua home. All three re-quoted live on the operating carriers' own booking engines on 31 August 2026. Two were unchanged to the cent. The Vancouver outbound rose about 20 per cent in seventeen days, which put this line CAD 500 higher and is why the advice is to book the flights first.
Stay	Eight blocks across 51 nights	$3,678.30	Eight blocks across 51 nights, every one re-read at room level on 22 August 2026, not off a search page. Where a property sells more than one room, the figure is the cheapest room that meets your requirements.
Ground transport and entry fees	Eight bookable legs between stops, the two Moyogalpa dock taxis paid on the ground, and the two country entry fees	$911.03	Seven of the ten legs are point quotes from the operator's own rate page.
Daily living	Food, drink and local transport	$2,598.62	An estimate, not a quote: there is no published price to check it against. The daily rates behind it are researched; how much of it you spend is up to you. The assumptions are set out below.
Activities and admissions	Twelve anchor outings, plus a general allowance	$1,214.52	The twelve are funded in full. The allowance covers whatever else you pick up along the way.
Shopping and miscellaneous	Souvenirs, gifts and incidentals	$510.00	Set at CAD 5 each per day. Markets are part of this trip, so it has its own line instead of sitting in the contingency.
Subtotal		**$14,659.53**	
Contingency (flat 10 per cent of everything above, at your discretion)		**$1,465.95**	
Trip total		**$16,125.48**	

That is CAD 8,063 each, and CAD 316 a night for the pair of you across fifty-one nights. It does NOT include: travel insurance, which your Prep Guide treats as the first thing to settle and which for fifty-one nights is a four-figure line; the travel-clinic visit, vaccines and any prescription supply; and gratuities, which the Guide sets out at CAD 8 to 15 per person for a half-day guide, CAD 15 to 25 for a full day, and CAD 5 to 10 for a driver. Everything else in this Blueprint is inside the figure above. With no budget ceiling set, there is nothing to measure this against, and we have not invented one. Flights and accommodation are the two largest categories on a trip like this, and the two most affected by when you book and what you choose, so the figure is most likely to move there. Every property costed here was chosen for quiet, a private bath and walking distance to transit, with air conditioning at the three Nicaraguan bases, not on price. If a first choice is gone when you book and you take the named alternative instead, that line moves; every alternative is named and priced in its own base chapter. Choices like that and the timing of the flights will shift the figure a little either way, and the ten per cent contingency is there to absorb that.

Cost by itinerary stop

Each stop shows where you sleep, what living there costs day to day, the anchor outings tied to that stop plus a share of the general activities allowance, and a share of shopping and incidentals. Travel between stops is not in this table, and neither are the two country entry fees. Both are in the Logistics table below, so nothing is counted twice.

STOPS, NOT BASES. ALL FIGURES IN CANADIAN DOLLARS FOR THE TWO OF YOU

Stop all figures CAD	Stay	Daily living	Activities & admissions anchors + allowance	Shopping	Stop subtotal
1. Guatemala City (airport, arrival night) Dec 13, 1N	$64.65	$131.28 ($131.28/day)	$10.00	$10.00	**$215.93**
2. Panajachel, Lake Atitlán Dec 14 to Dec 25, 12N	$785.00	$631.15 ($52.60/day)	$211.37 Reserva Natural Atitlán; Casa Flor Ixcaco weaving	$120.00	**$1,747.52**
3. Antigua Dec 26 to Jan 3, 9N	$663.00	$430.10 ($47.79/day)	$380.08 Cultural walking tour; Pacaya day hike	$90.00	**$1,563.18**
4. Copán Ruinas Jan 4 to Jan 6, 3N	$248.00	$79.52 ($26.51/day)	$112.06 Copán park with Las Sepulturas; Macaw Mountain	$30.00	**$469.58**
5. Guatemala City (airport, transit night) Jan 7, 1N	$64.65	$131.28 ($131.28/day)	$10.00	$10.00	**$215.93**
6. Granada Jan 8 to Jan 20, 13N	$766.00	$576.64 ($44.36/day)	$241.44 Las Isletas boat tour; walking-tour tip comes out of the discretionary allowance	$130.00	**$1,714.08**
7. Isla de Ometepe Jan 21 to Jan 27, 7N	$453.00	$356.59 ($50.94/day)	$167.52 Authentic Ometepe tour; Ojo de Agua	$70.00	**$1,047.11**
8. San Juan del Sur Jan 28 to Feb 1, 5N	$634.00	$262.06 ($52.41/day)	$82.05 Cristo de la Misericordia; beach day shuttle	$50.00	**$1,028.11**
Total	**$3,678.30**	**$2,598.62**	**$1,214.52**	**$510.00**	**$8,001.44**

Stops, not bases. Guatemala City is one place visited twice, so it appears twice. The two transit nights are priced at the mid tier throughout, because airport-adjacent Zona 13 offers no local option on a 22:36 arrival. The activities allowance and the shopping allowance are each spread evenly by night, at CAD 5 per person per day, so CAD 10 a night for the two of you.

Getting there and getting around: every fare on the trip

Everything that moves you: the flights out of Vancouver and home again, the five moves between your bases, the local transfers at either end of them, and the two entry fees Honduras and Nicaragua charge you at the border. Numbers reference the stop numbers in the table above. The entry fees are shaded: they are the only two lines on this trip that have to be paid in cash, in person, on the day.

ALL FIGURES IN CANADIAN DOLLARS FOR THE TWO OF YOU

Segment	Mode	Est. time	Cost CAD
✈ Vancouver → 1. Guatemala City	Flight, AA 1099 and AA 2455 via Dallas, Main Cabin, one checked bag each	14h 36m	**$3,074.00**
1. Guatemala City → 2. Panajachel	Shared shuttle, Atitrans	approx 4h 30m	**$97.51**
2. Panajachel → 3. Antigua	Shared shuttle, Guatemala Transportation	approx 3h	**$55.72**
3. Antigua → 4. Copán Ruinas	Shared shuttle, Marvelus Travel, border crossing	approx 5h	**$139.30**
Honduras entry fee, El Florido land border	Country entry fee, cash at the border. USD 5 each, so USD 10 for the two of you	–	**$13.93**
4. Copán Ruinas → 5. Guatemala City	Shared shuttle, Adrenalina Tours	approx 6h	**$153.23**
✈ 5. Guatemala City → Managua airport	Flight, Copa CM380 nonstop, Economy Classic, one checked bag each	1h 21m	**$1,118.86**
Nicaragua entry fee, tourist card issued on arrival	Country entry fee, cash US dollars at immigration. USD 10 each, so USD 20 for the two of you	–	**$27.86**

Segment	Mode	Est. time	Cost CAD
Managua → 6. Granada	Private transfer, Iskra Travel	approx 1h	**$78.01**
6. Granada → 7. Isla de Ometepe	Road to San Jorge plus car ferry to Moyogalpa	approx 3h	**$75.22**
Moyogalpa dock → Santa Cruz isthmus	Taxi, or your hotel meets the boat	approx 40m	**$34.83**
Santa Cruz isthmus → Moyogalpa dock	Taxi, arranged through your hotel the day before	approx 40m	**$34.83**
7. Isla de Ometepe → 8. San Juan del Sur	Ferry to San Jorge plus car and driver, Iskra Travel	approx 3h	**$61.29**
8. San Juan del Sur → Managua airport	Private transfer, Iskra Travel	approx 2h 30m	**$139.30**
✈ Managua → Vancouver	Flight, AV 392 and AC 1755 via Miami, Light fare plus one checked bag each; the bag range puts the true span at CAD 1,418 to 1,691 and this line carries the midpoint. 2 February is also a cheap day: every other day that week prices about CAD 96 higher per person	12h 33m	**$1,554.20**
Transport, flights and ground			**$6,616.30**
Country entry fees			**$41.79**
Total			**$6,658.09**

What the daily living figure assumes

This line depends on how you actually travel, so here is what it was costed against. If any of it does not sound like you, say so and the number moves. Three eating occasions a day, only one of them substantial: a light breakfast, one main meal which may be lunch or dinner, and a light meal in place of the other. The main meal is a proper sit-down five or six days a week; on the other one or two days it is takeout or something quick. Of those sit-down main courses, 60 per cent are priced at a local comedor and 40 per cent at a mid-range restaurant, and the same mix is applied to breakfast and to the lighter meal. Self-catered breakfasts three mornings a week at Panajachel and Granada only, funded from a real grocery basket, because those are the two long stays. Drinks with meals and drinking water are funded at a normal daily rate. Local transport frequencies are estimates, not research. The activities line funds all twelve anchor outings in full, plus an allowance for the other things you will choose along the way. The base chapters list far more than twelve once you include each More to See and Do table, and the allowance covers the ones you decide on once you are there.

Cost-saving levers

- **Flights:** Set a fare alert now and buy on a low-fare day, not the first day you look **(saves potentially several hundred dollars, on the single largest line item)**. Fares on this routing move materially from day to day. Flights carry the widest swing of any line here, so timing the purchase matters more than any other single decision on this budget.
- **Flights:** Prepay the American checked bags online instead of at the airport counter, and ask Avianca's fare desk what the Miami-leg bag actually costs before you pay it **(saves CAD 10 versus airport bag rates on the American side, already assumed in the budget's CAD 3,074, and up to CAD 137 on the Avianca pair)**. American charges CAD 45 online against CAD 50 at the airport. Avianca publishes its first checked bag as US$22 to US$120, a spread of CAD 273 across the two of you, and that is CAD 273 of the CAD 283 total spread on the flights line. It is the single largest unresolved number in this budget and one phone call closes it.
- **Accommodation:** Ask directly about long-stay discounts at every base that clears seven nights **(saves an amount that varies by host; it is not automatic, so ask)**. Panajachel at 12 nights, Granada at 13 and Antigua at 9 all clear the weekly tier on Airbnb, Vrbo and Booking.com, and Isla de Ometepe clears it exactly at 7. Only Copán Ruinas at 3 nights and San Juan del Sur at 5 do not qualify. A discount is not applied automatically by every host or every platform, and the displayed rate may not already reflect it.
- **Ground transport:** A closed lever, kept here for the record: moving Panajachel to Antigua on a Thursday or Sunday adds the Chichicastenango market en route **(saves nothing: it costs about CAD 61 more than the plain shuttle, for a half-day at the market)**. It converts a dead transit day into a stop at the Chichicastenango market. It is not free: the only routing that does

it is the Atitlan Tour shuttle at US$42 a seat against US$20 for the plain one, so about CAD 61 more for the two of you. Your bookings fix this move on Saturday 26 December, so it is not available on this itinerary as booked; it becomes live again only if your dates shift.

- **Ground transport:** Treat the Antigua to Copán private transfer as an either or choice, not an automatic upgrade **(saves about CAD 50 to CAD 450 if you skip it, depending on which of the two quotes you would take, against the shared shuttle already in the budget at CAD 139.30)**. This Blueprint recommends pricing a private vehicle for the hardest travel day of the trip, and Part 3 explains why. The budget above funds the shared shuttle, so the upgrade is a choice, not an assumed cost, and not purely a comfort question. Global Affairs Canada advises against non-essential travel through the El Florido crossing and against road travel after dark, and the shared shuttle leaves at 03:30. The car and driver costs more and moves the whole run into daylight. Part 3 sets out both sides; the money is here so you can weigh them together.

Where to spend more, if you want to

Three places to spend more. None of them is necessary, and the budget above assumes you skip all three.

The Antigua to Copán transfer by car and driver. There are two quotes: Daytrip from about CAD 93 a head door to door, so about CAD 187 for the two of you, and Authentic Guatemala at about CAD 501 to CAD 585 for the vehicle (20 August 2026). If you spend more anywhere, spend it here. The scheduled crossing means a 03:30 pickup and five to six hours in a fifteen-seat van, border stop included; a car and driver runs on your own schedule. Get a written quote before you commit.

A room upgrade for the last five nights at San Juan del Sur. The beachfront suite tier runs roughly CAD 724 to 1,323 for the five nights, against the CAD 634 we have budgeted for the hotel we recommend. At the bottom of that range it is CAD 90 more; at the top it is nearly CAD 700 more, roughly double the line. Where you land depends on the property and how late you book, so price it before you decide. It is the easiest one on this list to decide late.

A proper dinner out, once or twice. Granada and Copán Ruinas each have one special-occasion restaurant, and neither publishes a price, which is normal for rooms like these. Ask your host to recommend and book one when you arrive. In Honduras, budget about 25 per cent on top of the menu price: tax and service are commonly added to the bill.

PART 5

While you're there

Contents

Quick-reference card (print & carry) · verified 2026-08-31

THE FIVE RULES THAT HAVE A PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCE (these live in the Prep Guide too; they are here because this is the document you carry): CARS: never get into a car you did not arrange. Book through your hotel or host, or use InDrive where it operates. Express kidnappings, where a driver takes you to an ATM, are reported in Nicaragua and Honduras and criminal taxi drivers are the named method (Government of Canada). Agreeing the fare protects your wallet; arranging the car protects you. A crowd of drivers meeting a ferry is normal and is still not a car you arranged. · AFTER DARK: avoid road travel and border crossings after dark wherever you have a choice (Government of Canada, all three countries). The one leg where this bites is the Antigua to Copán crossing: the budgeted shared shuttle leaves at 03:30, and booking a car and driver instead (Part 4, Where to spend more) moves it into daylight. · BITES AND SCRATCHES: wash the wound with soap under running water for a FULL FIFTEEN MINUTES, then get medical attention the same day, wherever you are and however minor it looks. Rabies is present in all three countries in dogs and bats. Do not wait to see how it goes. · THE PACIFIC: rip currents at San Juan del Sur. If you are pulled out, do not swim against it. Swim parallel to the beach until you are out of the pull, then come in at an angle. Never swim alone and never after a drink. · A LONG OR VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE ON THE COAST: at San Juan del Sur only, do not shelter in place. If standing is hard, or the shaking runs past about thirty seconds, walk inland and uphill as soon as it stops and stay up for several hours. Do not wait for a warning. Everywhere else and indoors: drop, cover, hold on.

Emergency numbers by country: Guatemala, no unified 911; Police 110 / 120; Ambulance and firefighters 122 / 123 (Bomberos Voluntarios are the primary medical responder); INGUAT tourist assistance 1500 or +502 2290-2800, ASISTUR by WhatsApp +502 5188-1819 (Government of Canada, read 28 Aug 2026). The tourist line is likely your best first call as a visitor · Honduras: dial 911, the national emergency number (Sistema Nacional de Emergencias; Government of Canada, read 28 Aug 2026). Copán local police +504 2651-4060. Honduras has no national tourist-emergency line, and for anything medical the insurer's line is still the stronger first call · Nicaragua has NO working general emergency number: Police 118; Medical assistance 128; Firefighters 115. Neither 911 nor 112 is reliably answered here, so dial the specific service you need (Government of Canada, read 31 Aug 2026)

Nearest hospital/clinic per base: Panajachel: Centro Médico San Francisco, Calle Principal de Panajachel 3-24, Zona 2; +502 7762-0352 / +502 3630-4545; treat as first response and stabilisation, capability not sourced; escalation to Guatemala City is 3-3.5 hrs by road. Air evacuation is arranged through your insurer, not dispatched: call their 24-hour line first · Antigua: Hospital Privado Hermano Pedro (English spoken by some doctors, US Embassy-recommended); Vitalmed clinic for English-speaking outpatient care; Guatemala City private hospitals ~45 min by ambulance · Copán Ruinas: Clínica Copán Ruinas (no emergency care, Mon–Fri 07:00–17:00, Sat 07:00–12:00, no confirmed phone, ask your host); Dr. Boqui at Clínica Handal for urgent local care, +504 2651-4408; San Pedro Sula 2.5–3 hrs or Guatemala City 5–6 hrs by road. Call your insurer before seeking treatment, not after, to confirm direction of travel · Granada: two private clinics in town centre; Hospital Vivian Pellas or Hospital Metropolitano, Managua, ~50 min. Both modern, US-trained-staff facilities; Vivian Pellas specifically has English-speaking doctors · Isla de Ometepe: Hospital Moyogalpa, +505 2569-4247; Altagracia health centre, +505 2552-6089; the ferry to San Jorge, then ~2 hrs to Hospital Vivian Pellas, Managua. Minimum 3 hours, longer if wind has cancelled the ferry · San Juan del Sur, Rivas regional hospital; ~30 min by taxi (~US$20 to US$25 for the car, about CAD 28 to CAD 35, each way), the easiest healthcare access of the trip's back half

Canadian government contacts: Embassy of Canada, Guatemala City (covers Guatemala (Panajachel, Antigua)) Edificio Edyma Plaza, 8th Floor, 13 Calle 8-44, Zona 10, Guatemala City; +502 2363-4348; gtmla-cs@international.gc.ca · Embassy of Canada, Tegucigalpa (covers Honduras, Copán Ruinas), 777 Corporate Building, 10th Floor, Lomas del Guijarro Sur, Blvd. Juan Pablo II, Tegucigalpa; +504 2280-0971; tglpa.consular@international.gc.ca · Embassy of Canada, Managua (covers Nicaragua (Granada, Ometepe, San Juan del Sur)) BDF Corporate Building, 6th Floor, 440m east of Club Terraza, Jean Paul Genie Road, Managua; +505 2268-0433; mngua@international.gc.ca · Global Affairs Canada: Emergency Watch and Response Centre, Ottawa (covers all of the above, 24/7, if the local embassy can't be reached). +1 613-996-8885 (call collect from outside Canada where available); SMS +1-613-686-3658; WhatsApp +1-613-909-8881 · Verified via travel.gc.ca: if any of these numbers don't connect, the Ottawa line above is the reliable fallback for all three countries

Travel advisory, and when to re-read it: All three countries: EXERCISE A HIGH DEGREE OF CAUTION. Read live at the source on 27 August 2026, when all three country pages carried an update date of 21 August. Regional advisories apply in Guatemala and Honduras. None covers a town you are staying in, but ONE COVERS A ROAD YOU USE: Global Affairs Canada lists the CA-11 El Florido border crossing under avoid non-essential travel, and you cross it twice, on 4 and 7 January. Guatemala's advice covers the crossing; Honduras excludes Copán Ruinas, the crossing and the CA-11 from its own border-

zone advisory. Travel it in daylight where the schedule allows, keep the stops brief, and do not linger at the border. Your Prep Guide carries the country-by-country summary. · Re-read it at **travel.gc.ca/destinations** 30 days before you fly and again 72 hours before. The headline level moves rarely; the regional detail moves more often, and it is the regional detail that would change a day of this trip.

Airline & insurer: Airline customer service: this trip flies on THREE separate tickets: the two international flights and the Guatemala City to Managua flight on 8 January, each with its own card in Your Booking Guide. Outbound, American Airlines: 800-433-7300 (**aa.com**, read 28 Aug 2026). Guatemala City to Managua, Copa: use the contact number on your Copa booking confirmation. Return, Avianca: use the contact number on your Avianca booking confirmation; their phone lines vary by country, and the confirmation carries the right one. The Miami to Vancouver leg is operated by Air Canada, 1-888-247-2262, useful on the day if that leg misconnects. Add all three reservation numbers here once booked · Travel insurer's 24-hour line: add this once your policy is purchased; it is the most important number on this whole page, given the medevac questions flagged in the Copán and Ometepe base essentials (Part 2) and the insurance note in Part 3

If a plan slips

A missed flight connection: Go to the airline's own service desk first. On the two international legs, each a one-connection routing, the ticketing carrier is normally obliged to rebook you toward your final destination on a misconnect, though exactly what you are owed depends on the ticket and the carrier's own conditions of carriage. The Guatemala City–Managua flight is a Copa nonstop, so the same desk-first approach applies there. Ask for rebooking first and keep every receipt. Have your full itinerary saved offline (a screenshot, not just an email you need Wi-Fi to open). If the lineup at the desk is long, most major carriers' rebooking lines are faster by phone than in person, so call while you wait in line.

A cancelled ferry (Granada→Ometepe, or Ometepe→San Jorge): This is the one disruption this Blueprint expects. Ometepe's ferries can be closed by wind, and you are travelling inside the windiest months for it. There's no workaround for a cancelled crossing, and your bookings do NOT carry a spare day at either end of Ometepe: the nights are back to back. The defence is the one Part 2 describes, built inside the day: take the earliest big ferry of the morning and keep that evening clear of anything time-critical. If a crossing is cancelled anyway, your accommodation on either side is the first call. The 28 January crossing matters most because it lands on the check-in day of your non-refundable San Juan del Sur hotel. Hosts and hotel staff on this route are used to it and can help rebook the next sailing.

A closed attraction or a no-show tour operator: Most of the activity cards in this Blueprint are either walk-up, where there is nothing to lose in advance, or run through small, direct-contact Nicaraguan operators (Mono Loco, Volcancito), not large booking platforms. If an email confirmation goes unanswered close to the date, a same-day **WhatsApp** message is the more reliable channel with operators this size. WhatsApp is how they run their business.

An unreachable host or a locked-out arrival: Every accommodation pick in this Blueprint has a direct phone number or, for the Airbnb stays, the host's in-app messaging (see each stay's card in Your Booking Guide). Try that first, not the booking platform's own support line, which is slower for anything happening in real time. If a host is unreachable on arrival, the next-door neighbour or the property's listed on-site staff (where one exists) is usually faster than escalating to Airbnb or Booking.com support.

Something that feels like it needs a doctor, but you're not sure: Call your travel insurer's 24-hour assistance line before you go anywhere, not after. This is repeated in Part 2's base chapters and on the quick-reference card at the start of this Part because the insurer's line can tell you which facility to go to, whether it's covered, and whether transport or evacuation is warranted, before you've spent money at the wrong place or delayed care by guessing.

The general posture, on all of the above: This Blueprint is built so that you always know who to call next. Every base has a local point of contact (a hotel front desk, a host, an operator's **WhatsApp**), and the numbers on the quick-reference card cover everything past that local layer. This document, the contacts in it, and your own good judgment on the ground are the whole system: no one is standing by a phone waiting for your call.

How to book optional tours: a short guide

HOW TO GO ABOUT IT

Work out first which of two kinds of operator you are dealing with. Established ones have real websites, published prices and a standard cancellation window, and you book them the way you would book anything. Small direct-contact operators publish no prices, and those you email or **WhatsApp** for a written quote before you commit. Email beats a phone call, because it leaves you a record.

Book ahead only where it is needed. Anything with a hard capacity limit or mandatory prepayment has to be locked in once your dates are firm. Walk-in sites, free tours and pay-at-the-gate stops do not need it. For those, ask your host when you arrive.

Vet both kinds of operator the same way. Read recent reviews, not a star average, check that the price you were quoted is the price they publish, and confirm they are licensed where a licence applies, which here means the guided volcano climbs and anything on the water.

Then ask what is paid in cash on the day. In both Guatemala and Nicaragua the park entrance fees, the guide's tip and the boat fares are routinely collected at the gate in local currency, so a tour price is often not the whole price. Respect a stated cancellation window; where none is published, ask and get the answer in writing instead of assuming a standard policy applies.

HERE SPECIFICALLY

This trip has two different booking markets. Guatemala's tour market (Antigua, Panajachel) runs mostly through established operators with real websites and published pricing. Book these normally. Nicaragua's market (Granada, Ometepe, San Juan del Sur) runs almost entirely through small, direct-contact operators via email or **WhatsApp**, with pricing often unpublished until you ask. Neither is a red flag. Several Ometepe outings publish no price. One of them needs a direct email or WhatsApp request before you travel: the San Ramón waterfall hike, run by Volcancito Adventure. It is on Ometepe's More to see and do list, not on a booking card, because no price could be established without asking. Pacaya and the Authentic Ometepe Tour both publish their prices on their own pages and are on the cards. On cancellation: the Guatemalan operators named in this Blueprint (Antigua Tours, De La Gente, OX Expeditions) all have stated cancellation windows that are enforced if you cancel under notice. Respect them. The Nicaraguan operators (Mono Loco, Volcancito) don't publish formal cancellation terms. Ask

directly when you book and get the answer in writing. On booking ahead: Luna Jaguar hot springs has a hard capacity limit and mandatory prepayment, so lock it in well ahead, and only once Copán dates are firm. The walk-in sites, the Free Walking Tour and Ojo de Agua don't need advance booking. Pacaya and the Authentic Ometepe Tour publish their prices, but each is booked by a direct message: Pacaya by email or phone to OX Expeditions, the Ometepe tour by email or WhatsApp to Volcancito. Book each one before you arrive: send the first message two to three weeks out and let the operator's answer set the date. The Copán ruins guide needs no booking; it is hired at the park entrance or through your hotel.

NAMED OPERATORS

Antigua Tours · Classic Cultural Walking Tour · 3 days' notice required for changes/cancellations

OX Expeditions · Pacaya volcano hike · +502 7832-0468 · **oxexpeditionsoffice@gmail.com**

De La Gente · coffee tour · **WhatsApp** +502 4179 2970 · **tours@dlgcoffee.org**

Mono Loco Adventures · Las Isletas boat tour, Mombacho hike, Masaya volcano tour, Pueblos Blancos circuit / cooking workshop · **WhatsApp** +505 8699 1443 · **info@mono-loco-adventures.com**

Volcancito · Authentic Ometepe Tour, San Ramón waterfall · **WhatsApp** +505 8858 0785 · **info@volcancito-adventure.com**

IF YOU WANT SOMETHING THAT IS NOT ON THIS LIST

The operators above are the ones tied to the outings in this Blueprint. For anything else you decide you want once you are there, these three carry most of the region and let you read recent reviews before you commit. We have not vetted individual listings on them, so treat them as a starting point, not a recommendation from us.

GetYourGuide · widest coverage in both countries, free cancellation on most listings up to 24 hours out

Viator · Tripadvisor's booking arm, so the reviews sit beside the listing

Expedia Things to Do · useful if you already hold an Expedia booking

PART 6

Your Booking Guide

Contents

This part is where you book the trip. The booking list puts every item in the order to book it, earliest first, with a box to tick when it is done. The timing is the same as the pre-departure checklist in your Prep Guide. The booking cards follow, in travel order, one per item, with the contact, the rate and room to write down what you booked. Work down the list and use the two page numbers on each row: the report page has the full description and what to watch for, and the booking card has the booking details. Nothing here is reserved: our recommendation is a starting point, not the only answer.

Where a stay is booked through a platform rather than direct with the property, the cancellation terms are set per rate and per date, and they are shown only inside the booking flow. Nothing published outside that flow is binding, so read the cancellation panel and screenshot it before you confirm.

The booking list, by deadline

Book now

17 items

as soon as you can, ideally 8 to 12 weeks before you leave, in this order

In this order: the flights first, because their price moves; then the two shuttles that run once a day; then the places to stay; then the two Nicaraguan cars; then the three tours. Book the Guatemala City airport hotel and the Copa flight at the same time, and arrange the arrival pickup in the same conversation. If you want the Luna Jaguar hot springs near Copán Ruinas, book that too once your Copán dates are firm: it caps numbers and takes payment up front.

BOOKED	DATE	WHAT IT IS	COST (CAD)	HOW TO BOOK	REPORT PAGE	BOOKING CARD
☐	13 Dec	FLIGHT **Vancouver → Guatemala City**	$3,074.00	aa.com	p. 9	p. 63
☐	8 Jan	FLIGHT **Guatemala City → Managua (flight)**	$1,118.86	copaair.com	p. 30	p. 71
☐	2 Feb	FLIGHT **Managua → Vancouver**	$1,554.20	avianca.com	p. 49	p. 78
☐	4 Jan	TRANSPORT **Antigua → Copán Ruinas (border crossing)**	$139.30	marvelustravel.com	p. 23	p. 68
☐	7 Jan	TRANSPORT **Copán Ruinas → Guatemala City**	$153.23	Adrenalina Tours or GuateGo	p. 30	p. 70
☐	13–14 Dec	STAY **Stopover · Mariana's Petit Hotel (arrival night)**	$64.65 for 1 night	Direct, by phone or email	p. 9	p. 63
☐	14–26 Dec	STAY **Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · Naab apart complex**	$785.00 for 12 nights	Booking.com	p. 11	p. 64
☐	26 Dec 2026–4 Jan 2027	STAY **Antigua · "Distrito Antigua" Apartment F**	$663.00 for 9 nights	Airbnb	p. 17	p. 66
☐	4–7 Jan	STAY **Copán Ruinas · Casa Buena Vista 3**	$248.00 for 3 nights	Airbnb	p. 24	p. 69
☐	7–8 Jan	STAY **Stopover · Mariana's Petit Hotel**	$64.65 for 1 night	Direct, by phone or email	p. 30	p. 71
☐	8–21 Jan	STAY **Granada · apartamentos Casa Amarilla**	$766.00 for 13 nights	Booking.com	p. 32	p. 72
☐	21–28 Jan	STAY **Isla de Ometepe · El Encanto Garden Hotel**	$453.00 for 7 nights	Booking.com	p. 38	p. 74

BOOKED	DATE	WHAT IT IS	COST (CAD)	HOW TO BOOK	REPORT PAGE	BOOKING CARD
☐	21 Jan	TRANSPORT **Granada → Isla de Ometepe (road and ferry)**	$75.22	**Armadillo Nicaragua**	p. 37	p. 74
☐	28 Jan	TRANSPORT **Isla de Ometepe → San Juan del Sur**	$61.29	**Ferry at the port kiosk; car with Iskra Travel, online**	p. 44	p. 76
☐	26 Dec 2026–4 Jan 2027	ACTIVITY **Antigua · Antigua Classic Cultural Walking Tour**	$44.58 each	**antiguatours.net**	p. 18	p. 67
☐	26 Dec 2026–4 Jan 2027	ACTIVITY **Antigua · Pacaya volcano day hike**	$100.46 each	**Ox Expeditions, by email or phone**	p. 19	p. 67
☐	21–28 Jan	ACTIVITY **Isla de Ometepe · Authentic Ometepe Tour**	$34.83 each	**Volcancito, by email or WhatsApp**	p. 40	p. 75

2 to 4 weeks before you leave

1 item

Book this shuttle yourself, then give your Panajachel host your arrival time. Your host does not arrange this one.

BOOKED	DATE	WHAT IT IS	COST (CAD)	HOW TO BOOK	REPORT PAGE	BOOKING CARD
☐	14 Dec	TRANSPORT **Guatemala City airport → Panajachel**	$97.51	**atitrans.net or guatego.com**	p. 9	p. 64

Any time before you fly

once the stays above are booked

4 items

Book the San Juan del Sur hotel last, as late as your dates allow. It is non-refundable: you pay before arrival and there is no free cancellation window.

BOOKED	DATE	WHAT IT IS	COST (CAD)	HOW TO BOOK	REPORT PAGE	BOOKING CARD
☐	26 Dec	TRANSPORT **Panajachel → Antigua**	$55.72	**atitrans.net or guatego.com**	p. 16	p. 66
☐	8 Jan	TRANSPORT **Managua airport → Granada (road)**	$78.01	**Iskra Travel**	p. 30	p. 72
☐	28 Jan–2 Feb	STAY **San Juan del Sur · HC Liri Hotel**	$634.00 for 5 nights	**Booking.com, last**	p. 45	p. 76
☐	2 Feb	TRANSPORT **San Juan del Sur → Managua airport**	$139.30	**Iskra Travel**	p. 49	p. 78

Once you are there

nothing to book before you go

9 items

Most of these need no booking at all: you walk in and pay at the gate. For the ones that do, the short guide is in **Part 5** (p56): **How to book optional tours** (p. 58)

BOOKED	DATE	WHAT IT IS	COST (CAD)	HOW TO BOOK	REPORT PAGE	BOOKING CARD
☐	14–26 Dec	ACTIVITY · NO BOOKING NEEDED **Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · Reserva Natural Atitlán**	$14.62 each	**Walk in, pay at the gate**	p. 12	p. 65
☐	14–26 Dec	ACTIVITY · NO BOOKING NEEDED **Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · Casa Flor Ixcaco weaving co-operative**	$11.88 to $50.25 each	**Walk in, or your host phones ahead**	p. 12	p. 65

BOOKED	DATE	WHAT IT IS	COST (CAD)	HOW TO BOOK	REPORT PAGE	BOOKING CARD
☐	4–7 Jan	ACTIVITY · NO BOOKING NEEDED **Copán Ruinas · The Copán Maya archaeological park**	$27.86 each	Walk in, pay at the gate	p. 25	p. 69
☐	4–7 Jan	ACTIVITY · NO BOOKING NEEDED **Copán Ruinas · Macaw Mountain Bird Park & Nature Reserve**	$13.17 each	At the gate, or in town	p. 26	p. 70
☐	8–21 Jan	ACTIVITY **Granada · Las Isletas de Granada Boat Tour**	$55.72 each	Mono Loco Adventures	p. 33	p. 73
☐	8–21 Jan	ACTIVITY · NO BOOKING NEEDED **Granada · The Original Free Walking Tour Granada**	Free	Mono Loco Adventures listing	p. 33	p. 73
☐	21–28 Jan	ACTIVITY · NO BOOKING NEEDED **Isla de Ometepe · Ojo de Agua Natural Pool**	$13.93 each	Pay at the gate	p. 40	p. 75
☐	28 Jan–2 Feb	ACTIVITY · NO BOOKING NEEDED **San Juan del Sur · Cristo de la Misericordia**	$2.79 each	No booking needed	p. 46	p. 77
☐	28 Jan–2 Feb	ACTIVITY · NO BOOKING NEEDED **San Juan del Sur · Beach day at Playa El Remanso**	$9.75 to $16.72 each	No booking needed	p. 47	p. 77

The booking cards, in travel order

Contents

These cards are in the order you travel, not the order you book, so use the booking-card page on each row of the booking list to find one. Each card holds what you need when you book and again at check-in, with room to write down what you booked and how you paid. The reasons behind each choice, and what to watch for, are in the report on the page shown at the top of the card. The workbook carries the same items in the same order, if you would rather record your bookings in a spreadsheet. Print these pages and take them with you.

Panajachel (Lake Atitlán)

Vancouver → Guatemala City · 13 Dec

FLIGHT
In the report p. 9 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	American Airlines · AA 1099 then AA 2455 · about CAD 3,074.00 for the two of you
ROUTING	Vancouver (YVR) 07:00 to Dallas Fort Worth (DFW), then Dallas Fort Worth to Guatemala City (GUA) 22:36 the same day. One stop, 14 hours 36 minutes gate to gate, with a 7 hour 4 minute connection at Dallas. Guatemala is ONE hour ahead of Vancouver, because B.C. is on permanent daylight time from 2026 and no longer falls back. Times re-checked 28 Aug 2026; re-confirm the flight numbers on **aa.com** when you book.
FARE	Main Cabin, two travellers, one checked bag each. Main Cabin includes no free checked bag on this route: bags are CAD 50 each at the airport or CAD 45 each if you pay online. The total is about CAD 3,074 with the bags prepaid online, or CAD 3,084 paying at the airport. This card and your budget use the prepaid figure, so prepay the bags.
WHAT TO BOOK	This outbound ticket, Vancouver to Guatemala City. The homebound ticket is separate; see its own card.
BOOK VIA	**American Airlines. Both segments of this outbound, Vancouver to Dallas and Dallas to Guatemala City, go on one American ticket at aa.com. Your homebound flight is a SEPARATE ticket on a different airline; see its own card**
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	Several carriers fly this major international corridor through their US hubs every day, so the airline rebooks a cancelled or missed leg; you do not replace it. Before you buy anything yourself, call the airline's rebooking line (on the quick-reference card in Part 5): a replacement ticket bought independently usually forfeits the fare you already hold.

FIND IT *No map pin for this one.*

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Vancouver → Guatemala City

☐ Booked Airline and flight _____ Date _____

Departs _____ Arrives _____ Seats _____

Confirmation _____ Bags included _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Stopover en route to Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · 13–14 Dec · 1 night

STAY
In the report p. 9 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	**Mariana's Petit Hotel (arrival night)**
WHAT TO BOOK	One double room for the night of 13 December. Give them your flight number and 22:36 arrival time.
ADDRESS	20 calle 10-17, zona 13, Aurora II, Guatemala City 01013. About a kilometre from the terminal
ROOM TYPE	Double room, private bathroom, fan
RATE	about CAD 64.65 a night · CAD 64.65 for the stay
CONTACT	+502 2261-4144 · reservaciones@marianaspetithotel.com
BOOK VIA	**Book direct by phone or email, which is how the hotel takes your flight and shuttle details, or through the Booking.com listing.** booking.com/hotel/gt/mariana-39-s-petit.html
CANCELLATION	Not stated on the listing when checked on 10 August 2026. Confirm the terms at the time of booking.

FIND IT map↗ · the hotel entrance on 20 calle, zona 13, about a kilometre from the terminal · 14.5786478, -90.5323538

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Stopover en route to Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · 13–14 Dec · 1 night

☐ Booked Confirmation _____ Booked through _____

Room or unit booked _____

Check-in from _____ Check-out by _____ Nights _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Guatemala City airport → Panajachel · 14 Dec

TRANSPORT
In the report p. 9 · BOOK 2 TO 4 WEEKS OUT

RECOMMENDED	Atitrans shared shuttle, USD 35 per person, so USD 70 for the two of you, about CAD 97.51. Several departures a day; the exact schedule for your date shows when you book at **atitrans.net**. Book the seat once your flight is ticketed.
BOOK VIA	**atitrans.net or guatego.com** › GuateGo
OPERATOR	+502 7720-3434 (Antigua office) / +502 3465-2828 (WhatsApp) · shuttle@atitrans.net
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	Adrenalina Tours runs the same airport-to-Panajachel shuttle at US$40 a head, about CAD 55.72, departing 06:00, 09:30, 11:00 and 14:00 every day from outside the terminal in front of Cafe Baretto. Verified on their own booking page, 20 August 2026, and corroborated independently. They want 48 hours' notice, so book at least two days ahead. The early departures change vehicle in Antigua. If Adrenalina is full, GuateGo sells the same run at US$44 a head, about CAD 61.29. › Adrenalina Tours › GuateGo
DEPENDS ON	your Base 1 accommodation. The drop-off point is your booked address.

FIND IT map↗ · the ground-transport meeting area at La Aurora arrivals, Guatemala City · 14.5879704, -90.5306907

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Guatemala City airport → Panajachel

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · 14–26 Dec · 12 nights

STAY
In the report p. 11 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	**Naab apart complex**
WHAT TO BOOK	The One-Bedroom Apartment for the 12 nights, 14 to 26 December, for two people.
ADDRESS	Callejón los ramos, Playa publica, zona 2, Panajachel 07010, Sololá, Guatemala. The Playa Publica sector, on Calle del Lago, flat along the water.
ROOM TYPE	A One-Bedroom Apartment with a private kitchen, an attached bathroom, a terrace and a coffee machine. Maximum two people. The property's own room table gives it as 15 square metres, which reads small for what it lists, so ask them to confirm the floor area when you book. The same rate also buys a Standard Double, a Double with Fan and a Studio with no kitchen; the one-bedroom is the only one of the four with a kitchen.
RATE	about CAD 65.42 a night · CAD 785.00 for the stay
CONTACT	+502 3993 7760 (the property's number on its Google Maps listing, checked October 2026)
BOOK VIA	**Booking.com** booking.com/hotel/gt/naab-apart-complex-panajachel.html
CANCELLATION	Free cancellation before 13 December 2026. No prepayment and no credit card needed, so you pay at the property.

FIND IT map↗ · the entrance on Callejon los Ramos, in the Playa Publica sector, flat along the water · 14.7368062, -91.1588121

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · 14–26 Dec · 12 nights

☐ Booked Confirmation _____ Booked through _____

Room or unit booked _____

Check-in from _____ Check-out by _____ Nights _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

If that one is gone: 6A Cozy Cloud Studio

STAY

WHAT IT IS	A bright third-floor studio in a small condominium with a shared garden and sun beds, run by a host four years in.
RATE	about CAD 46.17 a night · CAD 554.00 for the stay
CONTACT	Message the host through the Airbnb app first. If the host does not answer, call Airbnb support on +1 437 886 4409 (Airbnb Help Centre, checked October 2026).
BOOK VIA	**Airbnb** airbnb.ca/rooms/show/1491327102151493723

FIND IT map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Panajachel. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. · approximate: 14.7424, -91.1495

WHAT YOU BOOKED · If that one is gone: 6A Cozy Cloud Studio

☐ Booked instead Confirmation _____ Amount _____

Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · Reserva Natural Atitlán

ACTIVITY

In the report p. 12 · NO BOOKING NEEDED

COST	CAD 14.62 per person At the gate you pay 80 quetzales a person, about CAD 14.62. Treat it as indicative: the reserve publishes hours on its own site but no prices (checked 31 Aug 2026), so this comes from a guide last verified in 2025 and is the least certain figure in the chapter. Carry a little more than 80 each in cash.
HOW LONG	Shore Path ~45 min (private lake shore, 3 hanging bridges) or the shorter Coati Trail ~20 min (4 hanging bridges, a 23m waterfall). Both include suspension bridges, which matters if either of you is uneasy on them.
BOOK VIA	**Walk-in entry; no advance booking required for trail access (only flagged as needed for the zip-line option, which isn't part of this recommendation)**
WHERE	Antigua Finca San Buenaventura, Panajachel 07010, Sololá
WHEN	Open daily 08:00–17:00.

FIND IT map↗ · The visitor centre and ticket gate at the mouth of the San Buenaventura valley, 1.5 km northwest of town · 14.7510701, -91.1654989

No booking needed. Visited ☐ Notes _____

Panajachel (Lake Atitlán) · Casa Flor Ixcaco weaving co-operative

ACTIVITY

In the report p. 12 · NO BOOKING NEEDED

COST	CAD 11.88 to CAD 50.25 per person Per person for a weaving demonstration. The two sources reporting this differ widely and neither says why, so agree the price when you arrange the visit.
HOW LONG	About 1 to 1.5 hours for the weaving demonstration, longer if you stay to buy.
BOOK VIA	**The co-operative's website contact form was not working when we checked it in July 2026. The practical route is to have your Panajachel accommodation phone ahead on your behalf, or walk in.**
WHERE	Callejón Blanco, San Juan La Laguna, Sololá 07017
WHEN	Mornings, while the co-operative is working and the lake crossing is at its calmest. Confirm the day locally before you travel over.

FIND IT map↗ · The co-operative's shop in the centre of San Juan La Laguna · 14.6935625, -91.2856875

No booking needed. Visited ☐ Notes _____

Antigua

Panajachel → Antigua · 26 Dec

TRANSPORT
In the report p. 16 · BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY

RECOMMENDED	Shared shuttle, US$40 for the two of you one way, about CAD 56. Your budget carries CAD 55.72 for it, worked from Guatemala Transportation's published US$20 a seat. Atitrans publishes the same US$20 fare.
WHAT TO BOOK	Two shuttle seats for 26 December, booked several days ahead.
BOOK VIA	**atitrans.net or guatego.com** › **GuateGo**
OPERATOR	+502 7720-3434 / +502 3465-2828 (**WhatsApp**). Panajachel office: Calle Santander, anexo Hotel Regis · panajachel@atitrans.net
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	Xocomil Tours, based in Panajachel with a walk-in office, runs this at Q150 a head, about CAD 27.41, departing 05:00, 09:00, 12:00, 16:00 and 17:00 daily. Verified on their own page and independently, 20 August 2026, and booked by **WhatsApp** on +502 4937 2368. Because they are local, your hotel can reach them the same morning. 26 December is not a Guatemalan public holiday, so nothing is shut, but it opens the busiest week of the year in Antigua and seats go early. Book several days ahead, not the night before. › **Xocomil Tours**
DEPENDS ON	your Base 2 accommodation. The shuttle drops to your booked address.

FIND IT **map↗** · collection from your own door at the Naab apart complex, Panajachel · 14.7368062, -91.1588121

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Panajachel → Antigua

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Antigua · 26 Dec 2026–4 Jan 2027 · 9 nights

STAY
In the report p. 17 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	**"Distrito Antigua" Apartment F**
WHAT TO BOOK	Apartment F for the 9 nights, 26 December to 4 January, for two people.
ADDRESS	Antigua Guatemala, Sacatepequez, Guatemala. Centro Histórico, western edge: the listing places it across the street from Iglesia de Santa Lucia. Airbnb does not publish a street address.
ROOM TYPE	An entire studio home with a private kitchen and bathroom, two beds, sleeping up to four.
RATE	about CAD 73.67 a night · CAD 663.00 for the stay
CONTACT	Message the host through the Airbnb app first. If the host does not answer, call Airbnb support on +1 437 886 4409 (Airbnb Help Centre, checked October 2026).
BOOK VIA	**Airbnb** **airbnb.ca/rooms/show/30719035**
CANCELLATION	Free cancellation before 25 December 2026.

FIND IT **map↗** APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Antigua. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. · approximate: 14.5544, -90.7384

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Antigua · 26 Dec 2026–4 Jan 2027 · 9 nights

☐ Booked Confirmation _____ Booked through _____

Room or unit booked _____

Check-in from _____ Check-out by _____ Nights _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

If that one is gone: Beautiful spacious garden apt

STAY

WHAT IT IS	A private garden studio with its own entrance, inside a family home five blocks from Parque Central, with a large shared garden.
RATE	about CAD 101.00 a night · CAD 909.00 for the stay
CONTACT	Message the host through the Airbnb app first. If the host does not answer, call Airbnb support on +1 437 886 4409 (Airbnb Help Centre, checked October 2026).
BOOK VIA	**Airbnb** **airbnb.ca/rooms/show/40465336**

FIND IT **map↗** APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Antigua. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. · approximate: 14.55359, -90.7408

WHAT YOU BOOKED · If that one is gone: Beautiful spacious garden apt

☐ Booked instead Confirmation _____ Amount _____

Antigua · Antigua Classic Cultural Walking Tour

ACTIVITY

In the report p. 18 · BOOK NOW

COST	CAD 44.58 per person The operator charges 32 US dollars a person, about CAD 44.58. Paid to Antigua Tours direct.
BOOKING	Book now
HOW LONG	3 hours
BOOK VIA	**antiguatours.net's tour page directly**
OPERATOR	+502 7832-5821 / +502 7832-2629
WHERE	Meets at the Antigua Tours Park Office, inside Café Condesa, Central Park.
WHEN	Tuesday/Friday/Saturday, 09:30–12:30. On your dates that is realistically Tuesday 29 December first, then Saturday 2 January. You arrive around midday on Saturday the 26th, after the morning start, and Friday 1 January is a public holiday, so confirm that slot runs before counting on it.

FIND IT **map↗** · The operator's Park Office inside Cafe Condesa, on the west side of Parque Central · 14.5567436, -90.7343175

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Antigua · Antigua Classic Cultural Walking Tour

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Antigua · Pacaya volcano day hike

ACTIVITY

In the report p. 19 · BOOK NOW

COST	CAD 100.46 per person Two parts, both a person: 59 US dollars to the operator, about CAD 82.19, plus 100 quetzales at the park gate in cash, about CAD 18.27. Together about CAD 100.46 each.
BOOKING	Book now
HOW LONG	About 6 to 7 hours door to door, of which roughly two are walking.
BOOK VIA	**Email oxexpeditionsoffice@gmail.com, or call +502 7832-0468 / +502 4149-4380**
OPERATOR	+502 7832-0468 / +502 4149-4380 · oxexpeditionsoffice@gmail.com
WHERE	OX Expeditions office, 7ma Calle Poniente #17, Antigua; the volcano itself is in San Vicente Pacaya, Escuintla. The GPS pin is the Pacaya visitor centre at San Francisco de Sales, where the trail starts, not the office. OX's own map embed and some third-party listings still show an older office address on 2a/2da Calle Poniente.
WHEN	The 06:00 departure, not the afternoon one. Mornings are cooler and the volcano is far more likely to be clear.

FIND IT **map↗** · The visitor centre and ticket point at San Francisco de Sales, Escuintla, where the trail up begins. The tour meets in Antigua. · 14.3994588, -90.6150846

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Antigua · Pacaya volcano day hike

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Copán Ruinas

Antigua → Copán Ruinas (border crossing) · 4 Jan

TRANSPORT
In the report p. 23 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	Shared shuttle minivan, US$50 per person, so US$100 for the two of you, about CAD 139.30. Roughly five hours on the operator schedule, five to six door to door with the border, with hotel pickup in Antigua and drop-off in downtown Copán.
WHAT TO BOOK	Two seats on the 03:30 Copán shuttle for 4 January, or a car and driver by day (Daytrip, from US$67, CAD 93 a head).
BOOK VIA	**Marvelus Travel's route page at marvelustravel.com, or their WhatsApp line. Book through the route page itself, not the site's contact form.**
OPERATOR	**WhatsApp** +502 5922 7717 (Marvelus Travel, text only)
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	Booking a different shuttle company is NOT a fallback on this leg. Every seller quotes the same 03:30 departure, at four different prices. One describes the operator as a local third-party, and two of the companies are the same business under two names. They are reselling one vehicle, so if it does not run, none of them runs. The fallback is a different mode: a private cross-border car, which also lets you leave later than 03:30. Daytrip advertises this route door to door from US$67 a head, about CAD 93.33, read on their own page 23 August 2026. Authentic Guatemala quoted US$360 to US$420 for the vehicle, about CAD 501 to CAD 585, on 20 August 2026, and does not publish this route on its own site. Get a written quote before you rely on it. Whichever way you cross, carry small US dollars for the El Florido border fees. › **Daytrip** › **Authentic Guatemala**
DEPENDS ON	your Base 3 accommodation. The shuttle needs a confirmed drop address.

FIND IT **map↗** · collection from your own door at Distrito Antigua Apartment F, Antigua; confirm the pickup time with the operator the evening before · 14.556889, -90.733684

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Antigua → Copán Ruinas (border crossing)

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Copán Ruinas · 4–7 Jan · 3 nights

STAY
In the report p. 24 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED **Casa Buena Vista 3**

WHAT TO BOOK The apartment for the 3 nights, 4 to 7 January, for two people.

ADDRESS Copan Ruinas, Copan, Honduras. Airbnb does not publish a street address. The listing places it in El Centro, a short walk from Parque Central.

ROOM TYPE An entire rental unit with a private kitchen, a private bathroom, air conditioning and a refrigerator.

RATE about CAD 82.67 a night · CAD 248.00 for the stay

CONTACT Message the host through the Airbnb app first. If the host does not answer, call Airbnb support on +1 437 886 4409 (Airbnb Help Centre, checked October 2026).

BOOK VIA **Airbnb**
airbnb.ca/rooms/show/1151797949069928494

CANCELLATION Free cancellation before 30 December 2026.

FIND IT map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Copan Ruinas. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. · approximate: 14.8416, -89.1571

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Copán Ruinas · 4–7 Jan · 3 nights

☐ Booked Confirmation _____ Booked through _____

Room or unit booked _____

Check-in from _____ Check-out by _____ Nights _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

If that one is gone: Experience the authentic Copán Ruins

STAY

WHAT IT IS An entire one-bedroom unit for two, with a full kitchen, air conditioning and hot water, a little further out and noticeably cheaper.

RATE about CAD 56.67 a night · CAD 170.00 for the stay

CONTACT Message the host through the Airbnb app first. If the host does not answer, call Airbnb support on +1 437 886 4409 (Airbnb Help Centre, checked October 2026).

BOOK VIA **Airbnb**
airbnb.ca/rooms/show/1144822142636745801

FIND IT map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Copan Ruinas. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. · approximate: 14.8446, -89.1548

WHAT YOU BOOKED · If that one is gone: Experience the authentic Copán Ruins

☐ Booked instead Confirmation _____ Amount _____

Copán Ruinas · The Copán Maya archaeological park

ACTIVITY
In the report p. 25 · NO BOOKING NEEDED

COST CAD 27.86 per person

At the ticket window you pay 20 US dollars a person, about CAD 27.86, which covers the main site and Las Sepulturas together. The tunnels and the two museums are separate tickets.

HOW LONG About 3 hours for the core park, or most of a day with the tunnels and both museums.

BOOK VIA **No advance booking needed. Walk-in, pay at the gate. Guides can be engaged at the entrance or arranged through your hotel. There is no official online booking channel.**

WHERE ~1.5km / 20-minute walk from Parque Central, or under 5 minutes by tuk-tuk

WHEN Early morning, for cool air and low light across the stelae. Hours are widely reported as 08:00 to 16:00. The park's own custodian publishes tariffs but no hours (sitiomayadecopan.hn, checked 31 August 2026), and third-party sources disagree, one giving 08:00 to 18:00. Ring +504 2651-4108 or ask your hotel the day before.

FIND IT map↗ · 14.8385007, -89.1435351

No booking needed. Visited ☐ Notes _____

Copán Ruinas · Macaw Mountain Bird Park & Nature Reserve

ACTIVITY
In the report p. 26 · NO BOOKING NEEDED

COST	CAD 13.17 per person At the gate you pay 250 lempira a person, about CAD 13.17. The park's own site carries no date against this, so treat it as indicative and confirm on arrival.
HOW LONG	About 2 hours at an unhurried pace.
BOOK VIA	**Buy at the park gate, or tickets are sold at several points in town (ask your hotel).**
WHERE	San Pedrito, Copán Ruinas, ~10 minutes by vehicle from the plaza
WHEN	Open 08:00–16:00 year-round, no advance booking needed.

FIND IT map↗ · The park entrance in the Sesesmil valley north of town · 14.8532147, -89.1548354

No booking needed. Visited ☐ Notes _____

Granada

Copán Ruinas → Guatemala City · 7 Jan

TRANSPORT
In the report p. 30 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	Shared shuttle, US$55 per person, so US$110 for the two of you, about CAD 153.23. Roughly six hours, departing 06:00 from your Copán hotel.
WHAT TO BOOK	Two shuttle seats from Copán for 7 January, dropping at the airport hotel.
BOOK VIA	**Adrenalina Tours (confirmed bookable product page) or GuateGo** › **GuateGo**
OPERATOR	(502) 5308 5106 (Adrenalina Tours, Guatemala)
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	The public bus chain, verified: a colectivo from Copán to the El Florido border, a minibus on to Chiquimula, then Transportes Rutas Orientales into Guatemala City. Their own schedule, read 20 August 2026, shows weekday departures from Chiquimula at 02:30, 03:45, 05:00, 06:00, 06:45, 08:00, 09:15 and 10:00, and your travel day is a Thursday. Leaving Copán around 06:00 puts you on the 09:15 or 10:00 and into the city by mid-afternoon, in good time for the airport hotel. Roughly Q100 to Q180 a head, about CAD 18 to CAD 33. A car and driver is the faster option if the day is going badly. Note the same one-vehicle problem as the outbound leg: the 06:00 shuttle to Guatemala City and the one to Antigua are the same van. › **Transportes Rutas Orientales**
DEPENDS ON	the Guatemala City airport night at Mariana's Petit Hotel. This leg ends there, not at a base.

FIND IT map↗ · the shuttle stop at Parque Central, Copan Ruinas · 14.838797, -89.1554529

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Copán Ruinas → Guatemala City

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Stopover en route to Granada · 7–8 Jan · 1 night

STAY
In the report p. 30 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	**Mariana's Petit Hotel**
WHAT TO BOOK	One double room for the night of 7 January. Give them your shuttle pickup time when you book.
ADDRESS	20 calle 10-17, zona 13, Aurora II, Guatemala City 01013. About a kilometre from the terminal
ROOM TYPE	Double room, private bathroom, fan
RATE	about CAD 64.65 a night · CAD 64.65 for the stay
CONTACT	+502 2261-4144 · reservaciones@marianaspetithotel.com
BOOK VIA	**Book direct by phone or email, which is how the hotel takes your flight and shuttle details, or through the Booking.com listing.** booking.com/hotel/gt/mariana-39-s-petit.html
CANCELLATION	Not stated on the listing when checked on 10 August 2026. Confirm the terms at the time of booking.

FIND IT map↗ · the hotel entrance on 20 calle, zona 13, about a kilometre from the terminal · 14.5786478, -90.5323538

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Stopover en route to Granada · 7–8 Jan · 1 night

☐ Booked Confirmation _____ Booked through _____

Room or unit booked _____

Check-in from _____ Check-out by _____ Nights _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Guatemala City → Managua (flight) · 8 Jan

FLIGHT
In the report p. 30 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	Copa CM380 nonstop, Guatemala City to Managua, about one hour twenty in the air. Schedules show a departure around 10:30 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (read 28 Aug 2026), and 8 January is a Friday. Confirm the time in Copa's booking engine when you book. The fare is in the flights line of your budget, not here.
WHAT TO BOOK	Two seats on Copa CM380, Guatemala City to Managua, for 8 January.
BOOK VIA	**Copa Airlines direct. Book the flight before you book the car that meets it.**
OPERATOR	Copa Airlines Nicaragua service centre: +505 7513 7685, published by Copa and current as of October 2023. Copa does not publish a Guatemala-specific number we could confirm, so check copaair.com's call centre directory for a local line before you travel.
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	Avianca via San Salvador. Checked against live inventory for your date, 20 August 2026: bookable, around US$178 a head, about CAD 247.95. It leaves Guatemala City 05:25 and lands Managua 08:20, with later same-day combinations. It is a connection, so allow for the change at San Salvador, and the fare does not include a checked bag. › Avianca
DEPENDS ON	nothing else on this day. Book this leg first: the car in Granada is arranged around the landing time.

FIND IT map↗ · departures at La Aurora, Guatemala City · 14.5879704, -90.5306907

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Guatemala City → Managua (flight)

☐ Booked Airline and flight _____ Date _____

Departs _____ Arrives _____ Seats _____

Confirmation _____ Bags included _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Managua airport → Granada (road) · 8 Jan

TRANSPORT
In the report p. 30 · BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY

RECOMMENDED	A car and driver, about CAD 72 to CAD 84 for the two of you, budgeted at CAD 72.44 to CAD 83.58. Roughly an hour from the terminal to the colonial core.
WHAT TO BOOK	A car and driver from Managua airport to your Granada address, 8 January.
BOOK VIA	**Iskra Travel, who publish a fixed rate for this run. Book it ahead, not at the curb on arrival.**
OPERATOR	(+505) 2568-2054 (Nicaragua) / +1 267-248-0844 (USA) · info@iskratravel.com
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	The official cooperative taxi desk in the arrivals hall sells a fixed fare before you board and needs no booking. It is the simplest fallback, though the car and driver is better.
	› Iskra Travel
DEPENDS ON	your Base 4 accommodation and the flight above. The car runs to your booked address and meets that flight.

FIND IT map↗ · the ground-transport meeting area at Managua arrivals · 12.1444609, -86.1710823

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Managua airport → Granada (road)

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Granada · 8–21 Jan · 13 nights

STAY
In the report p. 32 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	**apartamentos Casa Amarilla**
WHAT TO BOOK	The One-Bedroom Apartment for 13 nights, check-in 8 January and check-out 21 January, for two people.
ADDRESS	Calle El Martirio, Granada 43000, Nicaragua. Centro Historico, about 200 metres from Calle la Calzada and 500 metres from the centre.
ROOM TYPE	A One-Bedroom Apartment, 45 square metres: an entire apartment with one bedroom, a living room, two bathrooms, a kitchen and air conditioning.
RATE	about CAD 58.92 a night · CAD 766.00 for the stay
CONTACT	+505 8169 0431 (the property's number on its Google Maps listing, checked October 2026)
BOOK VIA	**Booking.com** booking.com/hotel/ni/casa-amarilla-dos-pisos.html
CANCELLATION	Free cancellation, and no prepayment needed, so you pay at the property. Confirm the deadline in the booking panel.

FIND IT map↗ · the street door on Calle El Martirio, half a block south of Hotel La Pergola · 11.9277242, -85.9503819

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Granada · 8–21 Jan · 13 nights

☐ Booked Confirmation _____ Booked through _____

Room or unit booked _____

Check-in from _____ Check-out by _____ Nights _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

If that one is gone: Apartamentos Höla! Relax & Common Pool **STAY**

WHAT IT IS	An apartment inside a colonial building with an open courtyard and a shared pool, directly in front of the Convento San Francisco.
RATE	about CAD 58.23 a night · CAD 757.00 for the stay
CONTACT	+505 7535 5017 (the property's number on its Google Maps listing, checked October 2026)
BOOK VIA	**Airbnb** airbnb.ca/rooms/show/35583970

FIND IT map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in Granada. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. · approximate: 11.9328, -85.9507

WHAT YOU BOOKED · If that one is gone: Apartamentos Höla! Relax & Common Pool

☐ Booked instead Confirmation _____ Amount _____

Granada · Las Isletas de Granada Boat Tour

ACTIVITY
In the report p. 33 · **BOOK ONCE YOU'RE THERE**

COST	CAD 55.72 per person The operator charges 40 US dollars a person, about CAD 55.72, on a minimum of two people.
BOOKING	Book once you're there
HOW LONG	About 1.5 to 2 hours on the water.
BOOK VIA	**Mono Loco Adventures**
OPERATOR	**WhatsApp** +505 8699 1443 · info@mono-loco-adventures.com
WHERE	Isletas de Granada. Departure point is Granada's lakefront, a short taxi or tuk-tuk from the centre
WHEN	The 08:00 departure for birdlife and calm water, or 15:30 if you would rather have the sunset.

FIND IT map↗ · approximate: 11.8991667, -85.8852778

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Granada · Las Isletas de Granada Boat Tour

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Granada · The Original Free Walking Tour Granada

ACTIVITY
In the report p. 33 · **NO BOOKING NEEDED**

COST	Free Free to join. The guides work for tips, suggested at about CAD 14 to 28 a person.
HOW LONG	3 hours
BOOK VIA	**Search "The Original Free Walking Tour Granada", or book via Mono Loco Adventures' listing for this tour. Confirm the meeting point and departure times a day or two ahead, as free-tour operators sometimes adjust schedules.**
WHERE	Meets at Parque Central, Granada's colonial core
WHEN	The morning departure, before the heat comes up on the plaza. Confirm the meeting point and time a day or two ahead, as free-tour schedules move.

FIND IT map↗ · Parque Central, where Granada walking tours gather; the operator confirms the exact spot when you book · 11.9299292, -85.9539254

No booking needed. Visited ☐ Notes _____

Isla de Ometepe

Granada → Isla de Ometepe (road and ferry) · 21 Jan

TRANSPORT
In the report p. 37 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	About US$54 for the two of you all in, roughly CAD 75.22: US$50 for the road down to San Jorge and US$4 for the two ferry tickets across to Moyogalpa. Sailings from San Jorge run roughly hourly from 07:00 to about 17:30, thirteen to fourteen a day Monday to Saturday and fewer on some Sundays, and the crossing takes about an hour. Read 31 August 2026; confirm the morning you travel.
WHAT TO BOOK	A car and driver from Granada to San Jorge for 21 January, timed to meet a named morning ferry.
BOOK VIA	**Armadillo Nicaragua, a private-transfer operator running to San Jorge for the Ometepe ferry.**
OPERATOR	+505 7773-2652 (also **WhatsApp**) · info@armadillo-nicaragua.com
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	For the road down to San Jorge, Bigfoot runs a shared shuttle from Granada at 12:30 for US$19.90 a head, about CAD 27.72, and the public chain is a bus to Rivas then a shared taxi to the port for a couple of US dollars, about CAD 3. For the crossing itself, when the naval authority suspends sailings for wind there is no alternative. No bridge, no scheduled flight to the island, and the one direct Granada sailing that used to exist has not run since 2023. A suspension escalates instead of landing all at once. Small lanchas are stood down first and the large ferries keep going for a while, so on a marginal day switch to Ferry Che Guevara or Ferry Ometepe I instead of a lancha. The decision is usually made that morning, not the day before, so ask at the port or have the hotel ask. Verified against reporting on a documented closure, 20 August 2026. › **Bigfoot shuttles from Granada**
DEPENDS ON	your Base 5 accommodation. Confirm the pier your host meets you at.

FIND IT **map↗** · collection from your own door on Calle El Martirio, Granada. The crossing itself leaves from PUERTO SAN JORGE, and the pin there is the dock, not the ticket office: it is on your companion map under this base · 11.9277242, -85.9503819

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Granada → Isla de Ometepe (road and ferry)

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Isla de Ometepe · 21–28 Jan · 7 nights

STAY
In the report p. 38 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	**El Encanto Garden Hotel**
WHAT TO BOOK	The COMFORT TRIPLE ROOM for the 7 nights, 21 to 28 January, for two people.
ADDRESS	Finca El Encanto, 100 varas south of Finca Playa Venecia, Santa Cruz, Isla de Ometepe, Rivas, Nicaragua.
ROOM TYPE	The Comfort Triple Room, garden view, with AIR CONDITIONING, a patio and an attached bathroom. Sleeps two. The cheaper Triple Room has no air conditioning, so check the room name before you pay.
RATE	about CAD 64.71 a night · CAD 453.00 for the stay
CONTACT	+505 8506 2914 (the hotel's number on its Google Maps listing, checked October 2026)
BOOK VIA	**Booking.com** booking.com/hotel/ni/el-encanto-garden.html
CANCELLATION	Free cancellation before 18 January 2027. No prepayment needed, so you pay at the property. Breakfast is CAD 7 extra and optional.

FIND IT **map↗** · the gate on the Santa Cruz road, on the isthmus · 11.4884437, -85.5421471

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Isla de Ometepe · 21–28 Jan · 7 nights

☐ Booked Confirmation _____ Booked through _____

Room or unit booked _____

Check-in from _____ Check-out by _____ Nights _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

If that one is gone: Finca Aisa, Superior Bungalow

STAY

WHAT IT IS	An entire 35 square metre bungalow in the same village, with a private kitchen, a balcony and a terrace, rated 9.7 across 39 reviews.
RATE	about CAD 121.00 a night · CAD 847.00 for the stay
CONTACT	+505 8728 6234 (the property's number on its Google Maps listing, checked October 2026)
BOOK VIA	**Booking.com** booking.com/hotel/ni/appartamento-azul.html

FIND IT *No map pin for this one.*

WHAT YOU BOOKED · If that one is gone: Finca Aisa, Superior Bungalow

☐ Booked instead Confirmation _____ Amount _____

Isla de Ometepe · Authentic Ometepe Tour

ACTIVITY
In the report p. 40 · BOOK NOW

COST	CAD 34.83 per person The operator charges 25 US dollars a person for two or more, about CAD 34.83, or 30 solo. Site admissions on the day are not included.
BOOKING	Book now
HOW LONG	About 5 hours at an easy pace.
BOOK VIA	**Volcancito – Culture & Adventure. Based next to Caravan Hostel, Sintiope.**
OPERATOR	**WhatsApp** +505 8858 0785 / +505 5769 3283 · info@volcancito-adventure.com
WHERE	Tour starts in Sintiope, Ometepe Island. Operator based next to Caravan Hostel
WHEN	Start at 08:00 to 09:00, so the walking falls in the cooler half of the day.

FIND IT map↗ · Volcancito's own base at Sintiope, next to Caravan Hostel, where the tour starts · 11.5300656, -85.582517

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Isla de Ometepe · Authentic Ometepe Tour

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Isla de Ometepe · Ojo de Agua Natural Pool

ACTIVITY
In the report p. 40 · NO BOOKING NEEDED

COST	CAD 13.93 per person Paid at the gate, 10 US dollars a person, about CAD 13.93.
HOW LONG	About 2 to 3 hours, or half a day if you settle in.
BOOK VIA	**No advance booking needed or possible. A pay-at-the-gate attraction. Ask your accommodation for current details before going.**
WHERE	Altagracia, Rivas
WHEN	Before 10:00 or after 15:00, either side of the tour-group hours.

FIND IT map↗ · 11.5190588, -85.5669624

No booking needed. Visited ☐ Notes _____

San Juan del Sur

Isla de Ometepe → San Juan del Sur · 28 Jan

TRANSPORT
In the report p. 44 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	About US$44 for the two of you, roughly CAD 61.29: US$4 for the two ferry tickets back to San Jorge, then US$40 for an Iskra Travel car from the port to San Juan del Sur. The taxi from El Encanto to the Moyogalpa dock is its own budget line: about US$25 for the car, CAD 34.83 (US$20 to US$30 quoted).
WHAT TO BOOK	Hotel taxi to the Moyogalpa dock (book the day before), ferry tickets on the day, Iskra car and driver from San Jorge.
BOOK VIA	**Two separate bookings, no operator sells this leg end to end. The ferry is bought at the Moyogalpa port kiosk on the day (no online sales); the road leg from San Jorge to San Juan del Sur is booked online in advance.**
OPERATOR	(+505) 2568-2054 (Nicaragua) / +1 267-248-0844 (USA) · info@iskratravel.com
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	Gekko Trails Explorer runs a shared minibus from San Jorge and Rivas to San Juan del Sur at 14:30 daily, about US$20 a head or CAD 27.86, verified on their own page 20 August 2026, and any ferry landing before 14:30 connects to it. Underneath that, taxis usually wait for each ferry at San Jorge dock, roughly US$20 to US$30 for the car, about CAD 28 to CAD 42 for the forty-minute run. Keep the taxi as the fallback, for two reasons: nothing formally guarantees a car meets any given sailing, and a taxi taken off a dock is a car you did not arrange, which breaks the first of the five rules on your quick-reference card. If you need one, take the car a port official is directing, not the first driver to reach you, and agree the fare before you load. › **Gekko Trails Explorer**
DEPENDS ON	your Base 6 accommodation. The transfer needs a confirmed drop address.

FIND IT **map↗** · collection from your own gate at El Encanto, Santa Cruz, by a hotel-arranged taxi to the Moyogalpa dock. The return ferry crossing lands at Puerto San Jorge · 11.4884437, -85.5421471

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Isla de Ometepe → San Juan del Sur

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

San Juan del Sur · 28 Jan–2 Feb · 5 nights

STAY
In the report p. 45 · BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY

RECOMMENDED	**HC Liri Hotel**
WHAT TO BOOK	A Double Room for the 5 nights of 28 January to 1 February, leaving 2 February, for two people.
ADDRESS	San Juan del Sur, Rivas, Nicaragua. Facing the beach across the bridge, north of the river.
ROOM TYPE	A Double Room with air conditioning, an attached bathroom, a pool view and a flat-screen TV. Breakfast included.
RATE	about CAD 126.80 a night · CAD 634.00 for the stay
CONTACT	+505 2568 2274 (the hotel's number on its Google Maps listing, checked October 2026)
BOOK VIA	**Booking.com** booking.com/hotel/ni/hc-liri.html
CANCELLATION	NON-REFUNDABLE. You pay the property before arrival and there is no free cancellation window. It is the only one of your six base stays on those terms.

FIND IT **map↗** · the entrance north of the river, facing the beach across the bridge · 11.2602778, -85.8744444

WHAT YOU BOOKED · San Juan del Sur · 28 Jan–2 Feb · 5 nights

☐ Booked Confirmation _____ Booked through _____

Room or unit booked _____

Check-in from _____ Check-out by _____ Nights _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

If that one is gone: VillaKachimba **STAY**

WHAT IT IS	An entire open-plan studio downtown: two queens in one room, air conditioning, full kitchen. It sits above the host's restaurant, open evenings 4 to 10 except Tuesdays, and declares no CO alarm (read 28 Aug 2026).
RATE	about CAD 97.80 a night · CAD 489.00 for the stay
CONTACT	Message the host through the Airbnb app first. If the host does not answer, call Airbnb support on +1 437 886 4409 (Airbnb Help Centre, checked October 2026).
BOOK VIA	**Airbnb** airbnb.ca/rooms/show/814599644860382968

FIND IT map↗ APPROXIMATE · Airbnb's own approximate location for this listing, in San Juan del Sur. Airbnb withholds the street address until you book, so read this as the block, not the door. · approximate: 11.25253, -85.8702

WHAT YOU BOOKED · If that one is gone: VillaKachimba

☐ Booked instead Confirmation _____ Amount _____

San Juan del Sur · Cristo de la Misericordia

ACTIVITY
In the report p. 46 · NO BOOKING NEEDED

COST	CAD 2.79 per person Foreign visitors pay 2 US dollars a person at the top, about CAD 2.79.
HOW LONG	About 1.5 to 2 hours return from town, including time at the top.
BOOK VIA	**No booking required. A self-guided walk.**
WHERE	Calle La Chocolata, La Pepesca, El Nacascolo, San Juan del Sur
WHEN	Late afternoon for the light, or early morning to be off the trail before the heat. Leave enough daylight for the walk down.

FIND IT map↗ · The statue on the north headland; vehicle access is through the Pacific Marlin development and the last stretch is on foot · 11.2619448, -85.8817665

No booking needed. Visited ☐ Notes _____

San Juan del Sur · Beach day at Playa El Remanso

ACTIVITY
In the report p. 47 · NO BOOKING NEEDED

COST	CAD 9.75 to CAD 16.72 per person The beaches themselves are free. This is the round-trip beach shuttle per person, the higher figure being Playa Hermosa, which includes its beach access fee.
HOW LONG	Half a day at either, or a full day if you want both.
BOOK VIA	**No booking required.**
WHERE	Playa Remanso, south of downtown San Juan del Sur (coordinates given are for the Remanso beachfront area; Playa Hermosa lies further south along the same coast road).
WHEN	Any day of the week. Remanso is calmest in the morning, and the light at Hermosa is better late in the afternoon.

FIND IT map↗ · approximate: 11.2332957, -85.8414141

No booking needed. Visited ☐ Notes _____

San Juan del Sur → Managua airport · 2 Feb

TRANSPORT
In the report p. 49 · BOOK BEFORE YOU FLY

RECOMMENDED	Iskra Travel private transfer, US$100 for the vehicle with the two of you in it, about CAD 139.30. Their rate is banded by party size, so this is the two-passenger price, not a per-person fare.
WHAT TO BOOK	A door-to-door transfer for 2 February, pickup at 06:00. Confirm that time with the operator when you book.
BOOK VIA	**Iskra Travel**
OPERATOR	(+505) 2568-2054 (Nicaragua) / +1 267-248-0844 (USA) · info@iskratravel.com
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	South Wind Travel, based in San Juan del Sur, runs private airport transfers on this exact route and advertises them around the clock, verified on their own page and independently, 20 August 2026. Ask for a written quote when you book, because they do not publish a rate. Book a car and driver instead of a shared seat: every shared shuttle on this corridor leaves between 08:30 and 09:15, too late for a morning departure, and the public bus chain means a 05:00 start with two changes and a finish at a Managua market, not the airport. Your hotel can also arrange a driver as a third option. › **South Wind Travel**
DEPENDS ON	your return flight. The pickup time is set by the flight's departure time.

FIND IT **map↗** · collection from your own door at HC Liri, San Juan del Sur · 11.2602778, -85.8744444

WHAT YOU BOOKED · San Juan del Sur → Managua airport

☐ Booked Operator _____ Date _____ Time _____

Confirmation _____ Pickup or meeting point _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Managua → Vancouver · 2 Feb

FLIGHT
In the report p. 49 · BOOK NOW

RECOMMENDED	Avianca and Air Canada · AV 392 then AC 1755 · about CAD 1,554.20 for the two of you
ROUTING	Managua (MGA) 11:50 to Miami (MIA), then Miami to Vancouver (YVR) 23:23 the same day. One stop, 12 hours 33 minutes gate to gate (Vancouver sits ONE hour behind Managua, because B.C. is on permanent daylight time from 2026 and no longer falls back), with about a 3 hour connection at Miami. Times re-checked 28 Aug 2026; re-confirm on **avianca.com** when you book.
FARE	Light, two travellers, with one checked bag each. Light includes no checked bag, and Avianca publishes the first bag as a range rather than a fixed price, so the bag portion runs from CAD 61 to CAD 334 for the pair. So the all-in total runs from about CAD 1,418 with the cheapest bag price to CAD 1,691 at the ceiling. The figure on this card is the midpoint, CAD 1,554, which is what your budget carries; the bag price you actually get decides which way it moves.
WHAT TO BOOK	The Managua to Vancouver ticket, booked separately from your outbound at the same time.
BOOK VIA	**Avianca. Both segments home, Managua to Miami and Miami to Vancouver (the second operated by Air Canada, sold as an Avianca codeshare), go on one Avianca ticket at avianca.com. This is a SEPARATE ticket from your outbound American Airlines ticket**
IF IT FALLS THROUGH	This is a major international corridor flown by several carriers through their US hubs every day, so the airline rebooks a cancelled or missed leg; you do not replace it yourself. Call Avianca on the number on your booking confirmation (the quick-reference card in Part 5 has space to note it) before you buy anything yourself: a replacement ticket bought independently usually forfeits the fare you already hold.

FIND IT **map↗** · departures at Augusto Cesar Sandino, Managua · 12.1444609, -86.1710823

WHAT YOU BOOKED · Managua → Vancouver

☐ Booked Airline and flight _____ Date _____

Departs _____ Arrives _____ Seats _____

Confirmation _____ Bags included _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Requests and notes _____

Anything else you book

Another booking _____ OTHER

What it is _____

Date _____ Time _____ Where _____

Booked with _____ Phone or email _____

☐ Booked Confirmation _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Notes _____

Another booking _____ OTHER

What it is _____

Date _____ Time _____ Where _____

Booked with _____ Phone or email _____

☐ Booked Confirmation _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Notes _____

Another booking _____ OTHER

What it is _____

Date _____ Time _____ Where _____

Booked with _____ Phone or email _____

☐ Booked Confirmation _____

Payment ☐ Paid in full ☐ Deposit ☐ Pay on arrival Amount _____

Balance due by _____ Paid by (card or method) _____

Notes _____

SIDETRAKKED makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of this Blueprint. Transport schedules, entry requirements, availability and costs change frequently. Verify all time-sensitive information independently before booking or travelling. This document reflects research carried out between 28 July and 12 October 2026, with prices researched in August 2026, and is provided for planning purposes only.

Thank you for trusting SIDETRAKKED with your Central America trip. This Blueprint is your execution guide. Refer to it often, fill in the booking boxes as they lock, and carry it with you on the road. We hope it serves you well, from your first morning on the water in Panajachel to your last sunset in San Juan del Sur.

Rob Jensen · SIDETRAKKED · sidetrakked.com