

Belize & Tikal

The Best Things to See & Do



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Belize & Tikal Travel Guide

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1. Introduction

Belize is a small country of 8,867 square miles (22,970km²) and a population of about 420,000 people which borders Mexico in the north, Guatemala to the west and south and the Caribbean Sea to the east. It is the country with the lowest population in Central America and the only one where English is the official language. Belizean Creole is, however, the most widely spoken language in Belize.

The Mayas started settling here at around 1500 BC.



Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492 and the first English settlers arrived in 1638. Belize was originally claimed by Spain and Britain until England defeated the Spanish in the Battle of St. George's Caye in 1798. In 1840 the land became a British colony and was known as British Honduras. It was renamed to Belize in 1973 and it took until 1981 until Belize became independence from the UK. It is important to note that Guatemala is claiming much of Belize's territory as its own.

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2.1 Disclaimer

In this guide I am doing my best to give you the most accurate information. Over time, however, prices, times, and even attractions are subject to change. Therefore, I and backpackandsnorkel.com cannot be held responsible for the experiences of users while traveling. I strongly suggest that you write or call the attractions you plan to visit for confirmation when you make your travel plans.

Also, please stay alert, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Pickpockets and other criminals can easily ruin even the best planned vacation.

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4. Two Week Itinerary for Belize

Two weeks are plenty to get a good feeling for the country. Unless you want to constantly travel, you will not see all the highlights of this beautiful country. We decided to take it slow and throw in a several beach days and, since we are in this part of the world already, we added one day for Tikal across the border in Guatemala. Tikal is one of the major indigenous sites in the world and not to be missed.

If you want to see more of Belize, here is a list of other destinations that are worth a stop. They are, however, not covered in this guide: Corozal, Orange Walk, Belmopan, San Ignacio, Caracol, day trips to some of the atolls and the Blue Hole, Dangriga and Hopkins.

On the next page is our itinerary:

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5. Belize City

With a population of 57,000, Belize City is the largest town in Belize, but it is not the capital. This honor belongs to the city of Belmopan which lies about 50 miles (79km) to the south-west.

Belize will most likely be your entry point into Belize. Planes from international locations land and take off at Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport (BZE) which lies about 9 miles (14km) north-west of the city. Cruise ships anchor outside the Port of Belize (south of downtown) and passengers are tendered to the port.

We chose the **Best Western Plus Belize Biltmore Plaza** as our hotel as it lies on the Northern Highway which will bring us to [Altun-Ha](#) the next day, because it is only a short taxi ride from the **Ocean Ferry Belize** ferry pier ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#)) which will bring us to [Caye Caulker](#) in two days and because it is in walking distance to several restaurants and stores incl. a supermarket ([map](#)). The Belize sign ([map](#)) is about 1.1 miles (1.8km) away.



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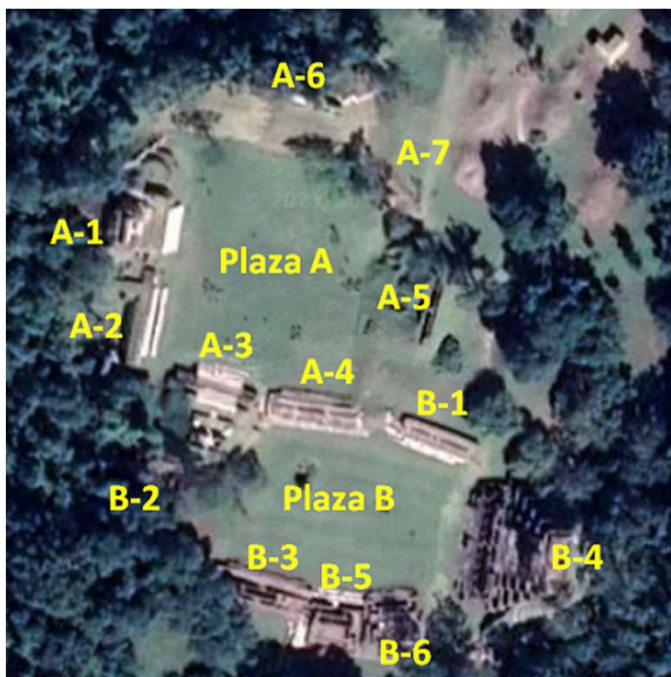
6. Altun Ha ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

Altun Ha is the name for an ancient Mayan site that was occupied from approx. 900BC to 1,000AD, abandoned in the 11-hundreds and was the place of some limited activity afterwards. The name Altun Ha is Yucatec Mayan and means "Rockstone Water".

Excavations that took place in 1964 to 1970 have unearthed only a small portion of the approx. 25 square mile city which has a population of about 10,000 people at its heyday.

Altun Ha is the most visited Mayan site in Belize, particularly due to large amounts of cruise ship passengers that come here when a cruise ship anchors in Belize City. Cruise ships are typically in port on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. You can find the port schedule [here](#).

The map below shows the structures that can be visited:



Structure A-1

The “Temple of the Green Tomb” (A-1) has, like typical Mayan temples, a large central stairway and an enclosure on the top. What makes it different is that it has three terraces which is designed more like temples in Lamanai ([map](#)) about 20 miles to the west.

Behind the first temple is a second temple which sits on the very top. It appears that the large stairway at the front fell into disrepair while the temple was still in use. It appears that another stairway that originated from structure A-2 and the palace A-8, which used to stand behind A-1 and A-2, had become the main access to the temple. Accessing the temple from the palace was likely more convenient for the elite than detouring through Plaza A.

The name “Temple of the Green Tomb” comes from the “Green Tomb” inside of it where a man, most likely a ruler of Altun Ha, was buried around 550 AD with over 300 jade artifacts and shell necklaces, ceremonial flint objects, pottery, hides, stingray spines and a codex (a bark-book).

The jade was likely mined in Copan, about 200 miles to the south in today’s Honduras, and is an indication of strong ties of both cities.

Structure A-2

This building was dismantled by locals looking for stones to build their houses. The footprint suggests that it was a palace that was attached to the back of structure A-3.

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Structure B-6

This was a small temple.



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7. Caye Caulker ([map](#), [reviews](#))

Caye Caulker was easily our favorite destination in Belize due to its laid back lifestyle.

The island lies about 20 miles (32km) from Belize City and can easily be reached by high-speed water taxi from Belize City called “Ocean Ferry Belize” ([map](#), [website](#), [schedule](#)).

[7.1 Snorkeling at Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Shark Ray Alley and Coral Gardens](#)

[7.2 Blue Wave Guest House](#)

[7.3 Hummingbirds Cabins](#)

For our trip to Caye Caulker, we asked the hotel to call a cab to bring us to the water taxis. It took about 10min for the cab to arrive and the drive to the water taxis was about 15min and cost US\$7.50. US dollar bills are accepted everywhere but no coins. Change is given in Belize currency. There are porters in green shirts at the water taxi entrance. They take your suitcase(s) and give you luggage receipt(s). The luggage is brought to your final destination (Caye Caulker or [Ambergris Caye](#)) by separate boat and your luggage will wait there at the end of the pier for you. You return the luggage receipt(s) and take possession of your bags.

You can buy your tickets at the end of the pier (last office at right) in Belize City. Don't forget to have your tickets stamped at the next window. There are 2 lines to get on the water taxi. The line on the left is for [Ambergris Caye](#) and the line on the right for Caye Caulker. I don't know why they do that as the same water taxi is boarded from both lines.

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Everyone got 1 bottle of soda (Coke, Fanta, Sprite) with the meal. Before the trip, everyone is asked to bring a water bottle with them. The crew has a 5 gallon water bottle with a pump on the boat, so there is always a free water refill.

As it started raining and the wind picked up, we skipped the ship wreck and went to 2 extra stops.

At one of those extra stops, the tarpon feeding spot, the crew handed out some fish and asked us to hold it over the water surface.

To see what happened, follow the link to this video:

<https://youtu.be/wDtdXE3Yx0s>



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The **Hol Chan Marine Reserve** covers 4,448 acres (18km²) of reef between Ambergris Caye and Caye Caulker. Hol Chan is Mayan and means "little channel", because there is a natural break in the reef which is about 75ft (23m) wide and between 5ft (1.5m) and 30ft (9m) deep and it is rich in marine life.



7.2 Blue Wave Guest House ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The location can't be beat. This hotel is a short 5-10min walk (approx. 5 blocks) from the water taxi pier and it is located on the main street in town on Caye Caulker. Within 300ft you can find several restaurants, a small supermarket, a beach where you can sometimes see people swim, souvenir stores and Ragamuffin and [Caveman tours](#), the two main tour companies on the island. It is about a 10min walk to The Split where you can swim. Even though the hotel is in the touristy heart of Caye Caulker, it is real quiet.

We had room 1 which was on the 2nd floor and had a partial ocean view. The room was small but clean. A small TV (smaller than my computer monitor at home) was hanging on the wall. Except for 2 soap bars, no shampoo or lotions were provided. The room had a queen size bed, no fridge, but a cooler (ice box) was provided. The room had an A/C and a standing fan, a small table and 1 night stand. Instead of a closet, a clothes hanger bar with hangers and a shelf board are provided. You definitely pay for the location.

The hotel has free wifi, but the owner does not share the password, so you need to bring your devices to him and he will enter the password. The hotel office is also an electronics store where you can find the owner during the day.

Long story short: This is a rustic hotel in a perfect location. I would definitely stay here again.

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The Corona del Mar offers free rum punch from 1-6pm in the lobby. A continental breakfast, which was included in our room rate, was served in the bar area until 10am. You have to go to the lobby to get your breakfast coupons first and then surrender the coupons to the chef in kitchen near the bar. She will prepare a hot breakfast (scrambled eggs, 1 breakfast sausage, 3-5 fruit slices (water melon, pineapple and sometimes cantaloupe). There is also a table with a limited buffet-style selection. It has white bread, a toaster, cinnamon bread, coffee, fruit juice, water, peanut butter, margarine and strawberry marmalade (each in Tupperware containers).

There is a restaurant right across the street. Some other restaurants and supermarkets are within easy walking distance. It takes about 15min to walk into town on the side of busy Coconut Drive which has a sidewalk only in some areas. A taxi ride into town is US\$2.50 per person.

The hotel rents kayaks, golf cars and bicycles. We did not use these services, however. At the reception you can also get beach towels should you need them.

The hotel has free wifi; the connection is not too stable and got disconnected once in a while, but typically only for a couple of seconds to a minute.

Long story short: Corona del Mar is a nice ocean-front hotel. As it is South of town, it is fairly quiet, but you will hear some noise from Coconut Drive and the near-by airport. I would stay here again.

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9. Placencia ([map](#))

We took the high-speed water taxi “Ocean Ferry Belize” ([map](#), [website](#), [schedule](#)) from Ambergris Caye to Belize City and a taxi to Crystal Auto Rental Belize. With our rental car, we drove to Placencia.

[9.1 Car Rental in Belize City](#)

[9.2 Drive to Placencia](#)

[9.3 Placencia Village](#)

[9.4 Michelo Suites](#)

[9.5 Monkey River Tour](#)

9.2 Drive to Placencia

You have two options to drive from Belize City to Placencia:

- Option 1: shortest drive ([map](#))
- Option 2: most convenient drive ([map](#))

The shortest drive (Option 1) from Belize City is via the Western Highway, then the Coastal Highway, the Hummingbird Highway, the Southern Highway, and then Placencia Road. Unfortunately, the Coastal Highway is a compacted dirt road with large potholes and it can get very muddy when it rains.

With our high clearance Jeep, driving the Coastal Highway was not much of a problem, albeit it was a slow drive. If you drive a low clearance sedan then I suggest that you avoid the Coastal Highway - your rental car company may not allow you to take this highway anyway.

In this case, you will need to take Option 2, which is the paved Western Highway all the way to Belmopan and then change to the paved Hummingbird Highway and after Hope Creek you will then take the paved Southern Highway.

This route is 28 miles (45km) longer, but since you can drive faster, it will take about the same time.

Here are some photos from our drive via the rural Coastal Highway, which will bring you along a British military installation:

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9.5 Monkey River Tour ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#), [meeting point](#))

Monkey River is one of Belize's major rivers. It discharges into the Caribbean Sea in Monkey River Town ([map](#)) and forms about 10 miles (16km) farther upstream at the confluence of the Bladen and Swasey rivers. Monkey River is navigable by small boat year-round and allows visitors to experience a nearly untouched ecosystem and lots of birds, occasional manatees, iguanas and howler monkeys.

We had booked our tour with Monkey River Eco Tours. Alfonso picked us and another customer up in his boat shortly after 8am at the M&M gas station in Placencia ([map](#)) and then navigated to a hotel about 15min away where he picked up another family. Then we were on our way to the Monkey River.

The first stop was his company's office and restaurant which is located at the mouth of the Monkey river in Monkey River Town ([map](#)) where we could use the restroom and order lunch. Then, a few minutes after 10am, it was off to the Monkey River.

It was a rainy day and it had rained quite a bit in the previous days. Luckily, after we left the office, the clouds started clearing and the sun finally burned through the clouds. Alfonso stopped many times and showed us different birds and iguanas. We also saw bats and a turtle. Alfonso was very knowledgeable and he also provided facts about different plants.

In total we saw maybe 10 different bird species. The majority had different shades of gray or was mostly white; one small bird was bright yellow.

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10. Tikal ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

The ruins of Tikal are some of the grandest Mayan ruins on the planet. Due to their location in remote northern Guatemala, they are actually easier to access from Belize than from Guatemala City. And that is exactly what we did.

[10.1 Drive to Tikal](#)

[10.2 Crossing the border between Belize and Guatemala](#)

[10.3 Hotel Las Gardenias](#)

[10.4 Tikal](#)

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10.1 Drive to Tikal

The drive from Placencia to Tikal takes at least 6h, depending how much traffic there is at the border. Be advised that the border is not open all day, so it is advisable to start early in Placencia or to stay overnight at San Ignacio.

The road is paved on both sides of the border, but it often goes through rural villages where you will see people, pets and livestock on the roads. Please do not drive after dark. Roads are not lit at night so that it can be very dangerous for the driver and for pedestrians alike, especially considering that most people here have a dark skin and tend to wear dark clothes at night.

Be prepared:

- to pay cash in Guatemala. Credit cards are accepted in hotels and some restaurants that other establishments that cater to tourists.
- that most people do not understand English
- that tap water is never drinkable in Guatemala; neither for tourists nor for locals. That also means that you need to be careful with ice for your drinks and you should not eat the skin of any fruits or vegetables unless they are cooked. Purified water is cheap and easy to find. If in doubt, we always opt for beer.



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Long story short: This is a nice, clean and affordable hotel which lies within 30min of the first entrance gate of Tikal. Everyone who plans to experience sunset or sunrise at Tikal and self-drive to Tikal should be warned, there will be plenty of people (often dressed in dark clothes) walking or riding unlit bicycles on the streets after dark and there will be the occasional animal on the road. You may only see them when you are a few feet away and thus driving at night can be very dangerous.



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10.4 Tikal ([map](#), [reviews](#), [website](#))

[10.4.1 Tikal Overview](#)

[10.4.2 History of Tikal](#)

[10.4.3 Layout of Tikal](#)

[10.4.4 Self-Guided Walking Tour of Tikal](#)

[10.4.5 Structures of Tikal](#)

10.4.1 Tikal Overview

Contrary to what some websites claim, you can still buy a ticket after 3:30pm that is good for same day and the next day admission. And you should definitely make use of that, because a sunset in Tikal can be magical.



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You pay admission at the first entrance gate where you need to park your car, get out and walk up some stairs to the left to get to the ticket booth.



There, you will likely be approached by tour guides that offer their services for US\$60 per day. This is the same price that tour guides in the park charge.

We declined as we had tons of information about Tikal – and you do too if you use this guide. We did, however, buy the map for Q20 which is very helpful as it shows the walking paths so that you don't get lost.

At the time when we entered the park we were advised that the speed limit was 45kph (29mph) and given an admission ticket that noted the entrance time. We drove 30-35mph and it took us about 25min to reach the main area. Yes, Tikal is huge!

10.4.2 History of Tikal

Tikal was the capital of one of the most powerful kingdoms of the ancient Maya culture. It was likely called “Yax Mutal” or “Yax Mutul” with Yax meaning “first” and “Mutul” being the name of the kingdom. The name Tikal was given to the site after it was discovered in the 1840s and Tikal may mean "at the waterhole" after one of the waterholes here or "the place of the voices".

Tikal consists of approx. 3,000 structures and covers an area of about 6 square miles (16km²). At its peak, the population may have been as high as 90,000. The population within a radius of 16 miles (25km) could have been as high as 425,000. This number is, however, disputed. Tikal is believed to have been most powerful from 200AD to 900AD when the city was the dominant religious, political, economical, and military force in the Maya kingdom.

There is archeological evidence for agricultural use of this site dating back to 1,000BC.

The earliest large construction dates back to 400-300BC with the appearance of major pyramids and platforms. At that time, Tikal was still a small city.

When its northern neighboring cities El Mirador and Nakbe collapsed at around 100AD, Tikal started growing in importance.

The first dynasty of rulers at Tikal started at around 90AD.

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As early as 200AD, Teotihuacan (the largest and one of the most powerful cities in the pre-Columbian Americas, located near today's Mexico City) had embassies in Tikal. It appears that in 378AD, Tikal was invaded by Teotihuacan and the ruling king killed and replaced by a Teotihuacan king. This led to a powerful alliance between both cities until the 7th century.

In the 6th century, a long running rivalry between Tikal and its neighbor to the north Calakmul ([map](#)) began which led to three wars between 537–744AD.

- In the first war from 537–572AD Calakmul formed alliances with Caracol ([map](#)), El Perú ([map](#)) and El Zotz ([map](#)) who eventually defeated Tikal. Tikal was not destroyed, but declined for several decades. This is called the “Tikal hiatus” during which nearly no new inscriptions or large-scale construction took place at Tikal.
- Over time, Tikal slowly regained strength while El Zotz declined and a cold war with minor skirmishes but no major battles followed.
- The second war erupted from 650–695AD after Calakmul had overrun Dos Pilas ([map](#)), a military outpost established by Tikal in 629AD. The ruler of Dos Pilas was the brother of Tikal's king. After initially fleeing, he was captured and instead of being executed he was reinstated under Calakmul's rule. He then defeated Tikal in 657AD and dominated the city. In the following years, forces loyal to the Tikal king retook Dos Pilas and other cities and the ruler from Tikal rebuilt his following. But it took until 695AD until Tikal defeated Calakmul and ended the second war. Occasional violence continued, however.

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Tikal was abandoned by 950, maybe with the exception of a few people. But those vanished at the latest in the 10th or 11th century and Tikal was claimed by the rainforest until it was rediscovered in the 1840s.

The fall of Tikal may have partly been caused by droughts and partly by using poisonous chemicals like mercury containing paint which washed off the buildings and contaminated the ground water.

In 1525, Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés passed only a few miles away without discovering the ruins. In 1696, a Spanish friar got lost in the forest and described a ruin that may have been Tikal.

Throughout history, rumors of Tikal surfaced, but the area was too remote for anyone to seriously consider coming here.

The site was then visited in 1848 for the first time and the first excavation began in 1881. A small airstrip was built in 1951 to make it easier for archeologists to reach the site. From 1956 through 1970, major archaeological excavations were carried out by the Tikal Project team of the University of Pennsylvania. Further excavations then took place from 1979 to 184.

10.4.3 Layout of Tikal

What you see today is only a small part of the original city. Tikal probably covered an area of about 48 square miles (125km²) and, at the perimeter of some areas, a 20ft (6m) wide trench behind a rampart was found. It may have been built as a defense against invading armies. The residential area inside was about 23 square miles (60km²) while the central area that you can visit today covers about 6 square miles (16km²).

Tikal's buildings can be divided into the major temples and different building groups:

[Central Plaza \(Gran Plaza\)](#)

[Temple I \(Temple of the Great Jaguar\)](#)

[Temple II](#)

[Central Acropolis \(Acropolis Central\)](#)

[North Acropolis \(Acropolis del Norte\)](#)

[Temple III \(Temple of the Great Priest\)](#)

[Temple IV \(Temple of the Two-Headed Serpent\) and Star Wars](#)

[Temple V](#)

[Temple VI \(Temple of the Inscriptions\)](#)

[South Acropolis \(Acropolis del Sur\)](#)

[East Acropolis](#)

[Plaza of the Seven Temples \(Plaza de los Siete Templos\)](#)

[Lost World \(Mundo Perdido\)](#)

[E-Group](#)

[Lost World Pyramid \(Great Pyramid, Structure 5C-54\)](#)

[Temple of the Skulls \(Templo de las Calaveras, Structure 5D-87\)](#)

[Talud-Tablero Temple \(Structure 5C-49\)](#)

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[East Plaza](#)

[Structure 5D-43](#)

[Structure 6C-16 \(Group of the Masks\)](#)

[Ballcourts](#)

[Bat Palace \(Palace de Las Ventanas, Windows Palace, Palacio de los Murciélogos\)](#)

[Group F](#)

[Group G \(Palacio de las Acanaladuras, Palace of the Grooves\)](#)

[Group H](#)

[Group L \(Group 5B-1\)](#)

[Group M \(Group 3D-1\)](#)

[Group N \(Group 5C-1\)](#)

[Group O \(Group 4D-1\)](#)

[Group P \(Group 3D-2\)](#)

[Group Q \(Group 4E-4\)](#)

[Group R \(Group 4E-3\)](#)

Connecting these groups were several causeways (raised paved roads):

Maler Causeway

It connects [Temple I](#) and [Group H](#). South of Group H is a large relief that is carved onto the limestone bedrock which depicts two bound captives.

Maudsley Causeway

It connects [Temple IV](#) and [Group H](#). and is 0.5 miles (0.8km) long.

Mendez Causeway

It is 0.8 miles (1.3km) long and connects [East Plaza](#) and [Temple VI](#).

Tozzer Causeway

It connects the [Great Plaza](#) and [Temple IV](#).

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10.4.4 Self-Guided Walking Tour of Tikal

Tikal is a large park that requires lots of walking. Be prepared and have a large map at hand (you can buy that at the park entrance) and this travel guide or hire a guide in the park.

Please make sure to have enough water as there are very few opportunities to buy refreshments in the park. Also, bring an umbrella to either protect you from the blazing sun or rain as there are almost no shelters that can protect you from a thunderstorm.

Day 1

I strongly suggest that you enter the park after 3:30pm on your first day to explore the [Central Plaza](#) and watch the sunset from [Temple II](#).



Source: Parque Nacional Tikal map, © Gran Jaguar Society

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Central Plaza (Great Plaza)

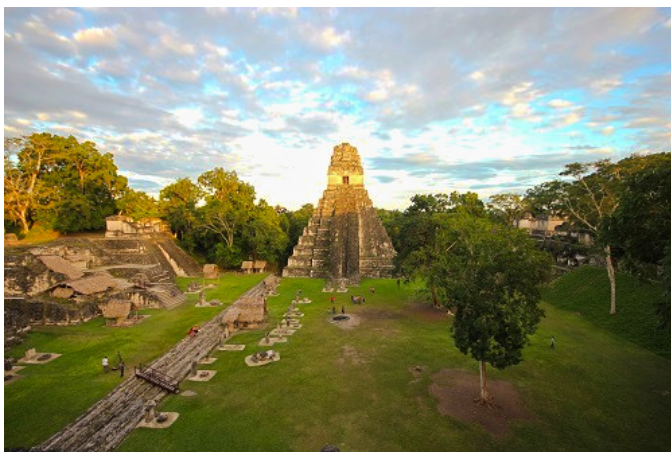
The Great Plaza forms the center of Tikal and is the place that you should visit first.

The plaza is bordered by:

- [North Acropolis](#) to the north
- [Temple II](#) to the west
- [Central Acropolis](#) to the south
- [Temple I](#) to the east.



To get here from the parking lot, follow the signs to “Templo I – Gran Jaguar”. This is about a 20-25min walk.



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Source: Artist's drawing of the Central Acropolis seen from the Palace Reservoir to the south. Source: ["central acropolis" Expedition Magazine . \(2014\): n. pag. Expedition Magazine. Penn Museum, 2014 Web. 31 Mar 2021](#)

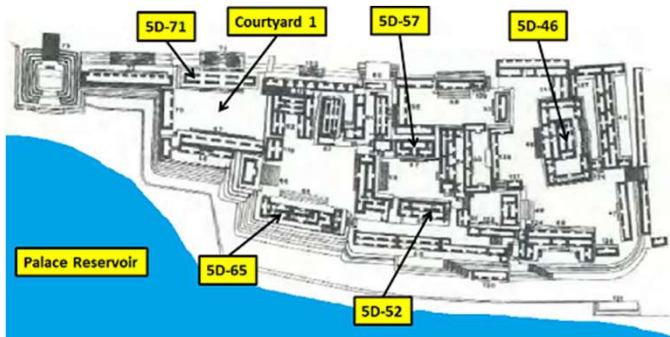
The first structures were built from 350BC to 1AD and consisted of masonry platforms with likely wooden structures on them. Postholes can still be seen here. The platforms were built on the natural bedrock which was leveled above Central Plaza and oriented east-west. The masonry palace that was later built between 250 and 550AD appears to have been built on top of the earlier platforms. The circumference stayed the same and was not widened.

The 43 palace structures are arranged around six courtyards which were built at different levels.

Lowland Maya sites of that time typically had burials under family residences, but excavations of the Central Acropolis uncovered only a few burials with the exception of structure 5D-46 where four burials were discovered. This indicated that the structures of the Central Acropolis were likely not permanently occupied residences and may have served as temporary residences for priests or schools.

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Notable structures are:



- **Structure 5D-46**

Built around 350AD, this opulent and complex single story structure was likely the residence of the royal family. Hieroglyphic inscriptions show that it was residence of king Chak Tok Ich'aak I who ruled from ca. 360AD until he was killed in 378AD.

It was built on a raised platform with stairways on the east and west of the building.



Source: ["structure 5d-46" Expedition Magazine . \(2014\): n. pag. Expedition Magazine. Penn Museum, 2014 Web. 31 Mar 2021](#)

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North Acropolis

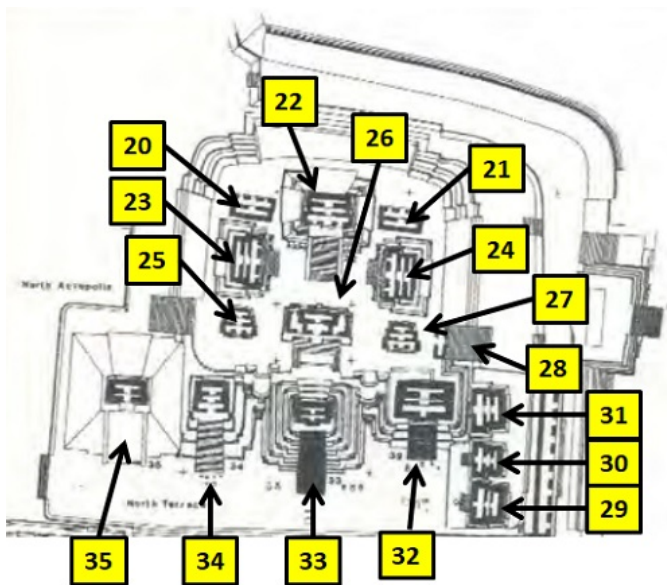
This architectural complex was a cemetery for over 1300 years. It measures 330ft x 260ft (100m x 80m), covers 2.5 acres (1ha), stands 39ft (12m) above the Great Plaza and 30ft (9m) above its bedrock foundation.

There are several stairways that lead up to the North Acropolis from the [Great Plaza](#).



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Structures of North Acropolis:



Source: Harrison, Peter D., The Central Acropolis of Tikal, map prepared by Amalia Kenward; The Central Acropolis of Tikal - in Sabloff, Jeremy A. "Tikal: Dynasties, Foreigners, & Affairs of State" ps. 171-206

- **Temple 20 (Structure 5D-20)**
Built around 550AD; faces north
- **Temple 21 (Structure 5D-21)**
Built around 550AD; faces north

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- **Temple 22 (Structure 5D-22)**

South facing Temple 22 underwent three construction phases – most other temples in the North Acropolis only had one or two. The earliest temple here was built around 250 CE. The second, which was decorated with giant stucco masks, around 350 CE and the third version in the 5th century. Archaeologists removed some parts of the third construction phase to expose earlier versions of the temple.

Burial 200 was the tomb of king Wak Chan K'awiil who ruled from 537?–562AD. The tomb was looted at some time after Tikal fell.

- **Temple 23 (Structure 5D-23)**

This east facing temple was built at around 250AD and has been partially restored.

- **Temple 24 (Structure 5D-24)**

Built roughly at the same time as Temple 23, this yet to be explored temple appears to be the mirror image of Temple 23.

- **Temple 25 (Structure 5D-25)**

This south facing temple was first built around 250AD. The second construction phase completely covered the earlier temple.

- **Temple 26 (Structure 5D-26)**

This structure is the central building of the North Acropolis. It was first built around 250AD and its tomb was looted after the fall of Tikal. It has been fully excavated and restored.

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Stela 4 and **Stela 18** are two monuments from the reign of king Yax Nuun Ayiin I that were re-erected at the base of his funeral pyramid. They show deities from Mayan and Teotihuacan cultures. Stela 4 shows the king with the Underworld Jaguar God under one arm and the Mexican Tlaloc (supreme god of the rain) under the other. His helmet shows a simplified version of the Teotihuacan War Serpent. Common in Teotihuacan sculptures, but unusual for Mayan sculptures, he is shown with a frontal face and not from the side.



Source: HJPD; resized; [license](#)



Source: HJPD; resized; [license](#)

Temple 35 (Structure 5D-35)

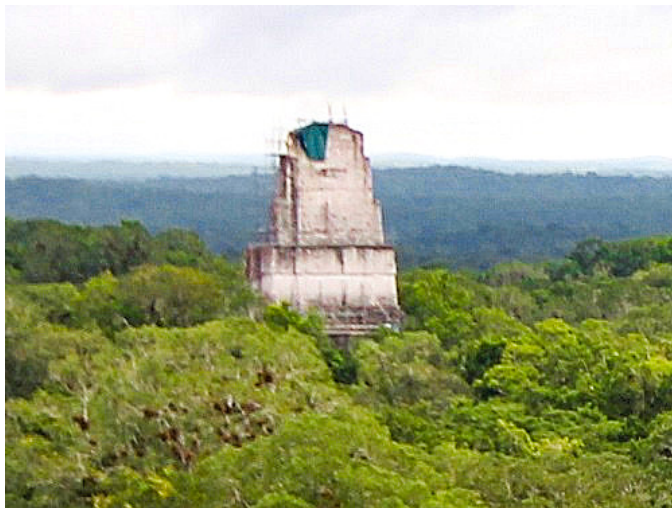
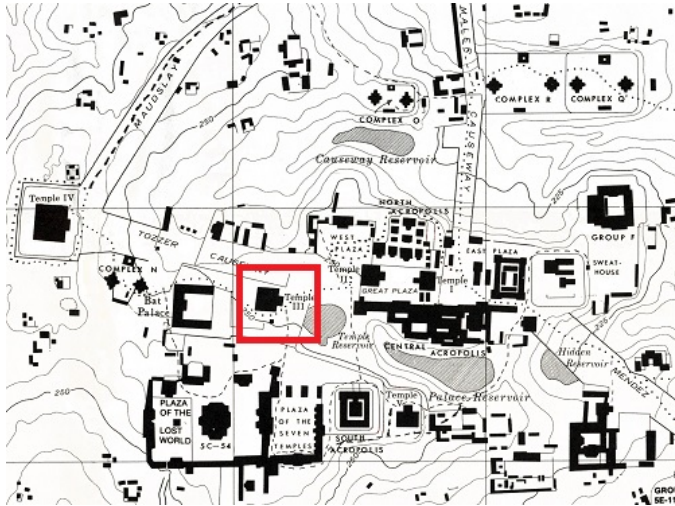
This unexcavated temple facing south towards the [Great Plaza](#). It is believed to be one of two likely locations for the tomb of king Nuun Ujol Chaak who ruled from 650–679AD. The other location is Temple 33.

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Temple III

Temple III is also called the “Temple of the Jaguar Priest”. The name comes from finely sculpted lintel on the inner doorway representing an obese figure wrapped in a jaguar skin. Unlike in other temples, there are only two chambers in the summit shrine and not 3.

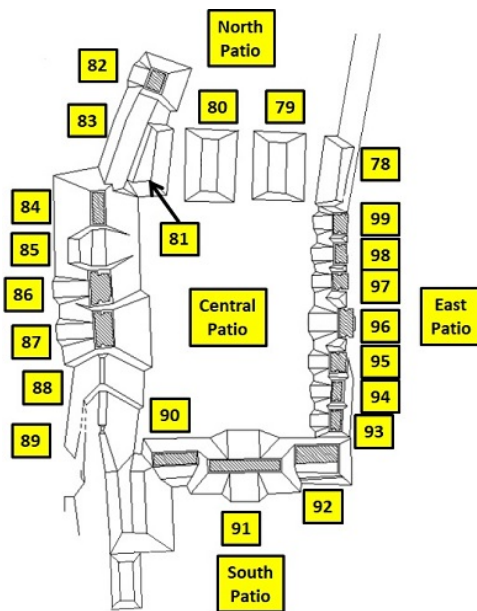


This plaza got its name from seven small temples that were built here between 600 and 900AD. With a surface area of 270,000 square feet (25,000m²), it is one of the three largest plazas in Tikal.



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The main axis of the plaza runs north-south from the central ballcourt in the north to the palace 5D-91 in the south. Later on, structures 5D-90 and 5D-92 were built as annexes in the southern side of the plaza while the east and west ballcourts were added on the northern side. The seven temples were likely added later.



Source: Gómez, Oswaldo, 2006, El Proyecto Plaza de los Siete Templos de Tikal: Nuevas intervenciones. En XIX Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala, 2005

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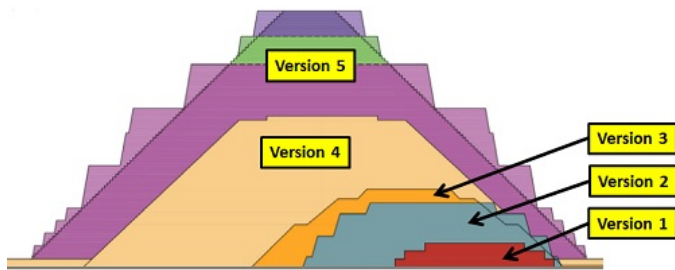
Structures and burials at Mundo Perdido:

- [E-Group](#)
- [Lost World Pyramid \(Great Pyramid, Structure 5C-54\)](#)
- [East Platform \(\(Structures 5D-82 through 5D-89\)](#)
- [Temple of the Skulls \(Templo de las Calaveras, Structure 5D-87\)](#)
- [Talud-Tablero Temple \(Structure 5C-49\)](#)
- [Palace \(Structures 5C-45, 5C-46, and 5C-47\)](#)
- [Misc structures \(5C-53, 5C-51, 5C-52, 5C-53, 6C-24\)](#)

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Source: Montuori, Riccardo; Torres, Ana Laura Rosado, Volume 8, Issue 15, Transformations in the Architecture of E-Groups: The Cases of Tikal and Uaxactun.

Construction phases of the Lost World Pyramid:

Phase	Date built	Height	North-South width	Stories
1	600BC	9.6ft (2.9m)	77ft (23.5m)	3
2	500BC	26ft (7.8m)	122ft (37.3m)	4
3	300BC	31ft (9.5m)	123.6ft (37.7m)	6
4	1 BC	59ft (18m)	200ft (60m)	8+
5	250AD	101ft (30.7m)	236ft (72m)	10

Phase 1

For the construction, the ground was leveled with up to 4.7ft (1.4m) deep infill . Not much of the original pyramid has survived. It is believed that it had three stepped levels with stairways on all four sides.

Phase 2

This version of the pyramid had four stepped levels and more than doubled the height of the previous pyramid

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Talud-Tablero Temple (Structure 5C-49)

This temple is the second largest building in Mundo Perdido.



This pyramid has a stairway that goes up to the summit shrine which used to have three rooms and a roof comb. The ceilings and roof comb collapsed into the first two chambers before excavation began.

Three burials were found in the pyramid and were dated to the period of the reign of Yax Nuun Ayiin II from AD 769 to 794. Due to the high quality of the funeral offerings, it is possible that those were members of the royal family.

The pyramid was built in five construction phases.

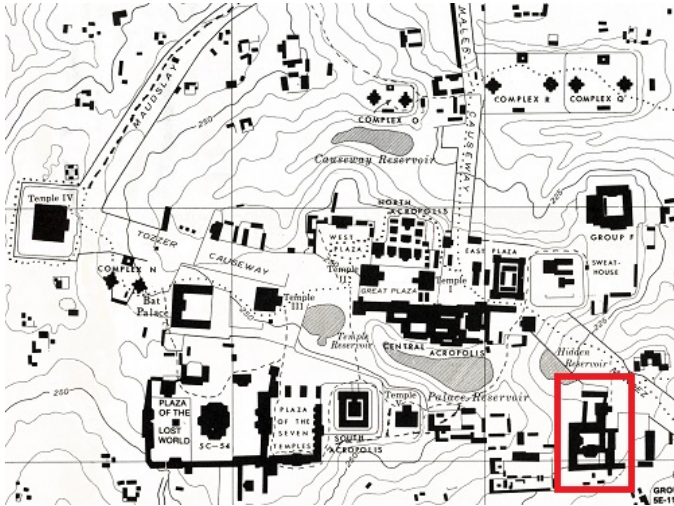
Phase 1

The first version was built in the late 3rd century AD in a precursor of the talud-tablero style and had three levels. This version was 23ft (7m) tall and the sides were 69ft (21m) at the base.

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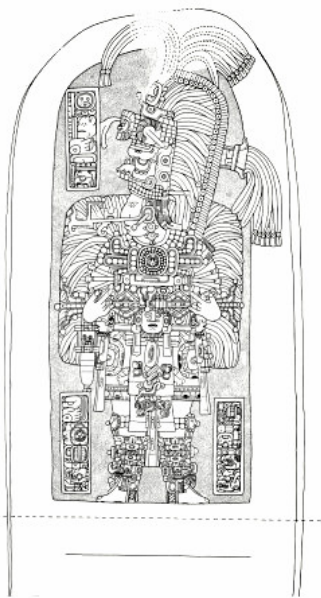
Palace of the Grooves (Palacio de las Acanaladuras, Group G)

Tikal's Group G is also known as Palacio Acanaladuras which means Palace of the Vertical Columns. The name is derived from vertical column-like elements (pseudo-columns), or vertical grooves along the façades of the building, which are most apparent on the rear wall.



The buildings are of high quality and it is believed that they were built between 734 and 746AD by King Yik'in K'awiil as a palace. The entrance is located in the north façade to a narrow tunnel that goes through the east wall and ends at the central courtyard.

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Source of the sketch: Milbrath, Susan, ARCHAEOASTRONOMY, VOLUME XVIII 2004, The Maya Katun Cycle and the Retrograde Periods of Jupiter and Saturn



11 Closing Remarks

ABOUT RUDY FROM BACKPACK & SNORKEL

I was born in Germany and emigrated to the US in 2003. My wife and I are a truly multinational couple: I, with my German background, and she with her Chinese heritage. Both of us live in the USA.

Sadly, working in the US means we have much fewer vacation days compared to other countries like e.g. Germany and thus we cannot travel very frequently.

Through a lot of trial and error, we have found our ideal travel and vacation style. **Making Memorable Moments** by focusing on important destinations, planning time for meeting the locals and, of course, for relaxation are our priorities.

We have also learned to appreciate local foods and try to eat as many local dishes as possible. Just for fun, we try to eat at one Chinese restaurant in each country we visit. It is absolutely amazing how different Chinese food is all over the planet.



MAKING MEMORABLE MOMENTS

You may take 10,000 photos during your vacation, rush from one attraction to the next, but what you will remember in your heart is how you were **Making Memorable Moments**.

For me, that was e.g. Spider Rock in Canyon de Chelly (ever heard of this US National Park?). When I first saw it, I was blown away by this majestic natural obelisk and the beautiful canyon that it sits in. I have been there two more times and still feel the same.

Or think of Isla Mujeres, a small island outside Cancun, Mexico. On the surface, Playa Norte is supposedly Mexico's most beautiful beach and it is always crowded and the boats that anchor there play loud music. Below the surface, Isla Mujeres is very relaxed, quite walkable and it has friendly locals, good authentic Mexican food and good international cuisine and is often very affordable.

Isla Mujeres is our personal paradise!



PACK YOUR BACKPACK & SNORKEL AND LET'S GO

Our travel style has evolved over the years. We are packing light these days when we travel and typically only need a small backpack per person - see my [Traveling Light Guide](#).

With this guide, I want to provide value to you and help you plan your own relaxing vacations with the goal of **Making Memorable Moments!**

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.