

tour dossier for:

Scenic Granada

14 nights / 15 days • Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica



The Facts

Dossier Last Updated: 27-03-2008

Tour Code: XGJ

Duration 14 nights / 15 days

Joining City: Antigua

Departure City: San José

Nearest International Airport (joining / departing): Guatemala City is 45kms from Antigua (please make sure that your flight is into Guatemala City, Guatemala, NOT Antigua in the Caribbean) / San José

This dossier is designed for this particular tour and should be read in conjunction with the country dossier(s), regional pre-departure booklet and optional excursions guides relevant to your itinerary. You will also receive a joining letter in advance of your journey with further information, while last minute updates may be posted in the Latest News section of our website. Please see tucantravel.com for details.



What's Included

- Accommodation: 14 nights in hotels
- Meals: No meals included
- Excursions: Copán ruins, Bay Islands, Ometepe Island
- Transport: Local public bus, minibus, various boats, on foot, taxi
- Group: Average 8 - 12; max 18
- Age: Recommended 18 - 60 Staff: Tucan Travel tour leader, local guides

What's Excluded

- Local Payment
- International flights & departure tax
- Border taxes
- Tips on included excursions, visas, travel insurance, personal items, other tips.
- Pre & post tour accommodation
- Airport transfers
- Spending money - allow US\$15-20 per day to cover meals, snacks, drinks, limited souvenirs, laundry and any extras

- Optional Excursions - Please see our [Optional Excursions Guide](#) (available from www.tucantravel.com) for a comprehensive list of optional activities and excursions available on this tour.
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Brief Overview

Discover why Honduras and Nicaragua are two of Central America's best kept secrets. Spectacular scenery, ancient ruins, unforgettable cities and two very special islands will leave you with a true love for this little known region.

This is an **Adventure Tour**. [Learn about our Travel Styles](#).

Itinerary

Day 1 to 3

Antigua Copán (Honduras)

Antigua is one of the most attractive towns in Central America. Here you will see the local indigenous population in their colourful costumes, selling their textiles in the cobbled streets and plazas. It is also the cultural centre of Guatemala, an ideal place to experience the traditional music, architecture and art of the country. Rich in ornate churches, convents, parks, plazas, cafés, restaurants, bars and colourful street markets and surrounded by awe-inspiring volcanoes, Antigua is one place you will never in your life forget!

On day 2 we leave Guatemala and cross into Honduras and the very attractive village of Copán Ruinas. Within walking distance of the village is one of the best kept and most interesting of all the ancient Maya sites. See the intricately carved stelaes (statues) depicting the 16 rulers of this once magnificent city, the wonderful staircase, ball courts and huge main plaza. Optional excursions to hot springs and horse-riding/trekking tours can be organised locally.

Day 4 to 7

Tela La Ceiba Roatán Island

From Copán Ruins we take a bus through coffee growing districts to the industrial city of San Pedro Sula, where we change buses for the coastal town of Tela. We have time here to relax on the beach before moving on to La Ceiba for a trip by ferry across to Roatán, the largest of the beautiful sun soaked Caribbean Bay Islands. Development on the island means there is plenty to do but it is also easy to find a deserted beach lapped by warm Caribbean waters. Here you will find palm-fringed lagoons, turquoise water, friendly locals, lively nightlife and stunning underwater scenery with some of the cheapest diving and snorkelling in the world!

Day 8 to 11

Tegucigalpa Granada (Nicaragua)

After a few days in Roatán we return by ferry to the mainland to catch our express bus through stunning countryside to Tegucigalpa (Teh-goo-c-gal-pa), the capital city of Honduras. The pace of life in Honduras only shifts up a gear in Tegucigalpa (or Tegus as it's thankfully called by the locals) where colourful chaos reigns eternal. Everything you imagine a Latin city to be, Tegus is charming, historic and framed perfectly by peaks on three sides. Your tour leader will give a brief orientation walking tour of the colonial centre before

going out for an optional group meal.

On day 9 we cross into Nicaragua and pass the capital, Managua, and travel on through tobacco growing regions to reach Granada on the shores of Lake Nicaragua. Granada has to be one of the most charming colonial towns in Central America. Founded in 1524 at the foot of Mombacho Volcano, this pretty town will remind many of its Spanish counterpart due to its Moorish feel. Here there are many optional excursions to visit surrounding countryside including an option to visit the Masaya National Park with its double crested active volcano, and the Masaya handicraft markets nearby. You could alternatively just relax in a typical Nicaraguan rocking chair and watch the locals go about their business.

With two free days in Granada you also have plenty of time to take a day trip into Managua to explore. After years of civil war and the devastating earthquake of 1972 the city centre was left in shambles. There are still buildings with huge cracks and weeds growing through them, the strange old Cathedral being one. But this now peaceful city is in the process of rebuilding itself. The recently restored National Palace offers a fascinating tour into the past.

Day 12 to 15

Ometepe Island San José (Costa Rica)

Travelling on we cross the vast Lake Nicaragua. This lake was once a large ocean bay, but seismic activity caused the land to rise cutting it off from the sea. This has left the lake with fresh water sharks and other salt-water species. We take a boat to the unspoilt and tranquil island of Ometepe in the middle of the lake. This, the 'true heart of Nicaragua,' is the perfect place to escape from the normalities of life.

The name of the island means "between two hills" and was formed by the two volcanoes, Concepción and Madera. The fertile volcanic soil provides the local population with perfect farming conditions for the many crops grown. You may choose to hire a local guide and spend your free time searching for ancient stone statues and petroglyphs which have been found all over the island. Those feeling athletic can go for volcano hikes or horseback riding on the black sand beach, while the less energetic can spend their time lying in hammocks, or taking a relaxing tour around the island. Either way you can be sure that Ometepe's charm and kind-hearted residents will make this the highlight of your trip.

The capital city of Costa Rica is nestled in a fertile valley among coffee and sugar-cane farms on a high plateau. There is not much left of the colonial era architecture due to the damage done by earthquakes but it is certainly worth seeing the National Theatre, built in 1897. Maybe you'll be lucky enough to catch a performance whilst you're here. The Gold, Jade and National Museums are also particularly recommended for a visit.

Our tour concludes in San José on day 15

Important note: the itinerary listed above is to be used as a guide only. Occasionally we may need to update this document and it may be different to the information printed in our current brochure. Tour leaders may need to make adjustments due to unforeseen circumstances during the tour. It is very important that you visit our website and review a copy of this dossier as close as possible to your departure date in case of changes that may affect your plans. Any last minute changes may also be posted in the Latest News section of our website.

Pre and Post Tour Accommodation

Very little time is spent in the starting and finishing cities and you will need to allow a few days at the beginning or end of your tour if you want to explore them further. For details of pre and post tour accommodation bookings (which should be made at the time of your tour booking) please refer to our current brochure or contact our reservations team.

About Adventure Tours

Adventure Tours travel by public transport wherever possible and so have a high degree of interaction with the local people. This hands-on style means that you will need to travel light (see below for details). Tucan Travel's Adventure Tours will bring you into contact with cultures and experiences that contrast dramatically with those at home and therefore a sense of humour and patience is essential!

Don't forget that Tucan Travel also offers four other tour styles: Discovery Tours (Central & South America) where we travel by private and comfortable, custom-built vehicle staying in hotels; Overland Expeditions (in South America only), which usually have a high percentage of camping, travel by overland truck and suit travellers who love the great outdoors; Budget Expeditions (great value tours for 18 to 35s) are flexible tours offering travellers optimum control over their budgets, travelling in our custom-built expedition vehicles, plus coaches and local transport, staying in pleasant hotels, hostels and campsites; Independent Travel offers personalised itineraries, stopovers and language schools with your choice of accommodation and flexible travel days.

Local Payment

The cost of all Tucan Travel tours includes a compulsory Local Payment which is in addition to the Tour Price paid to your booking agent. The Local Payment MUST be paid to your Tour Leader in full \$USD cash at the pre-departure meeting on the first day of your tour. The Local Payment is administered by Tour Leaders and no refunds can be made for any unused services or if you decide to leave the tour early.

Pre-Departure Meeting

The address of your joining hotel can be found on your joining letter and tour voucher. On arrival you should look for a Tucan Travel information sheet on the hotel notice board where you will find details of the pre-departure meeting. The tour leader will normally hold the pre-departure meeting on the afternoon of Day 1 (assuming that all clients have arrived by then). Your tour leader will give a briefing about the tour, outline the plan for the next few days, answer any questions and collect your Local Payment in full in US\$ cash. Then there may be an option for everyone to go out for dinner and drinks to start to get to know one another.

Please note that you will need to bring the following important items to the pre departure meeting:

1. Passport (including any necessary visas) original document and a photocopy.
2. Vaccination certificates (e.g. Yellow Fever, if required)
3. Travel voucher
4. Travel insurance policy
5. Local Payment

Tour Personnel

Adventure Tours use a variety of different styles of leadership in order to maximize your enjoyment and experiences. On this tour you will have a combination of Tucan Travel tour leader and local guides. The Tucan Travel Tour leader accompanies your tour local guides will lead your included and optional excursions.

Degree of Difficulty/ Fitness

Adventure Tours suit people who are fit and active. Although no experience is required there are many walks between bus/train terminals and hotels and travellers must be able to carry their own luggage over various terrains as well as lift up luggage onto the tops of buses!

There are pyramids to climb at the ruins (if you wish) which can be fairly arduous. The maximum altitude this tour reaches is about 1,600 metres (unless you go on an optional volcano climb) which is not considered high in terms of altitude sickness.

Pre-Departure Information

Once you have booked the tour (paid your deposit), your travel agent will provide you with a detailed pre-departure booklet, with in-depth information to help you prepare. If you do not receive your pre-departure information shortly after booking your tour please consult your travel agent. After you have paid for your tour in full you will also receive from your travel agent: a local map & joining letter for your arrival city, your tour voucher and transfer voucher (if applicable see below).

Country Dossiers

This Tour Dossier is designed to be read in conjunction with our Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua & Costa Rica Country Dossiers which you can download from our website or obtain from your booking agent. The Country Dossiers contain essential information about visas, arrival transfers, spending money & costs, taxes & tips, climate, local food etc.

What you need to bring

A full list of suggested equipment can be found in the pre-departure booklet.

A towel is optional as you can quite often use hotel towels, however if you prefer your own bring it along. Alternatively, a sarong is highly recommended as it can also be used in place of a towel. Snorkelling equipment may be useful, but not necessary, as you can easily hire it locally. If you want to save space you could just bring some swimming goggles - still great for spotting fish! You may wish to bring some kind of waterproof protection cover for your pack, as luggage tends to get thrown around a lot on public transport and it may get dirty and sometimes wet.

On Adventure Tours (particularly this tour) it is very important that you do not bring too much luggage as you will find it extremely difficult to get on/off buses and trains etc and there is a fair amount of walking to/from hotels. You are also likely to encounter many cobbled streets and dirt roads so luggage on wheels is totally unsuitable.

You must be prepared to carry your own bags at all times. We therefore strongly urge you to limit your luggage to a maximum of 10-14 kgs. Please see the relevant Country Dossier and Pre Departure Information booklet for further information about luggage requirements and what to pack.

Transfers

We do not offer arrival transfers in Guatemala City (Antigua) due to the ease, availability and cheapness of local transport. Please refer to your tour Joining Letter for prices and detailed guidelines.

Accommodation

All hotels are chosen for their central locality, security, friendliness, cleanliness and ambiance. Although sometimes simple, you will find clean comfortable rooms with en-suite facilities (occasionally bathrooms may be shared but this is rare), and often a bar and restaurant are attached or close by. All rooms will be allocated on a share basis, usually in twins or triples (depending on the male/female ratios).

Transport

On Adventure Tours our goal is to offer you as much variety as possible while meeting the local people. On this trip we will be using local public buses, mini buses, taxis, ferry and boats (life jackets provided). There will also be some walking with your luggage between bus terminals and hotels. Optional excursions may use other forms of transport, for example boats, horses and mountain bikes.

Meals

Meals, snacks and drinks are not included on this tour and are at your own expense. Your tour leader will be able to advise the best places to eat. Please see the relevant Country Dossier for more information about the local food.

Tour Highlights

- **Antigua** - One of the most beautiful colonial towns in the Americas overshadowed by gigantic volcanoes.
- **Copán** - The most southerly of all the Maya sites rich in hieroglyphics, sculpture and pyramids.
- **Tela** - A beach town known for its Garifuna culture and rhythmic punta' music
- **Roatán** - The most beautiful of the Bay Islands in the Caribbean, a great place to snorkel, dive and take in the sun.
- **Tegucigalpa** - This tongue-twisting word means 'Silver Mountain'. Once an old colonial mining city, Tegus' is now the modern capital of Honduras- a fascinating place to explore.
- **Granada** - A lovely colonial town, where you can sit back in a rocking chair and watch the world go by .
- **Ometepe Island** - A fascinating inland with many options for exploring.
- **San José** - Costa Rica's cultural capital with many museums, theatres, restaurants, and cafes.

Day to Day Itinerary

Day 1 Arrive Antigua (Guatemala)
Day 2 Copán Ruinas (Honduras)
Day 3 Copán Ruinas
Day 4 Tela
Day 5 Tela, La Ceiba, Roatán
Day 6 Roatán
Day 7 Roatán
Day 8 Tegucigalpa
Day 9 Granada (Nicaragua)
Day 10 Granada
Day 11 Granada
Day 12 Ometepe Island
Day 13 Ometepe Island
Day 14 San José (Costa Rica)
Day 15 San José

Please note the day to day itinerary above is given as a GUIDELINE ONLY.

Responsible Travel Tips

At Tucan Travel we are serious about our responsibility to care for the environment and people that we visit. Here are a few tips to help you to enjoy your tour while minimising your impact and enhancing your travelling experience. Learn more about our responsible travel policy at www.tucantravel.com.

1. Carbon offset your Tucan Travel tour and flights. Check out our website for details about how you can go about this www.tucantravel.com.
2. Bring your own metal water bottle. Fill up at restaurants or treat your own water on tour instead of buying lots of plastic bottles. Bear in mind that there may not be recycling facilities available at some destinations.
3. Cut out plastic – remove and recycle the packaging of new travel gear before you pack, and bring a light cotton or string bag for your shopping, so you can politely refuse plastic bags at shops and markets.
4. Bring a stack of pens and pencils and hand these out to children rather than offering sweets. Your alternative gifts will still be popular and the parents will thank you for saving their children's teeth – access to dental services may not be readily available there.
5. Learn a bit of the local language before you travel. Being able to say even a few words like hello, please and thank you will help you to connect with people in a positive way and really enhance your personal experience. Bring a phrase book on tour and keep practising to improve your confidence. You will also find some good language tips in the country dossier(s).

Feedback

At the end of your tour we would greatly appreciate it if you could take the time to complete a questionnaire about your experiences. The tour leader will give you a paper copy and an electronic version can be found on our website. We take feedback very seriously as it allows us to maintain and improve the very high standards we expect from our road crew, local operators, hoteliers, transportation and office staff, among others. We also use this information to improve our itineraries and optional excursions on offer. Thank you in advance for your help with this.

Subscribe to our e-newsletter

If you're keen to keep up-to-date with the latest news, special offers, events and competitions, why not sign up to our newsletter? It's easy - just enter your details in the 'subscribe' section on our home page, and that's it. Don't worry, we won't spam you, or pass on your details to any third parties, and it's easy to unsubscribe if you decide later on that it's not for you.

Join our online communities

Make friends with fellow passengers in the Tucan Travel forums, and ask questions about any tour you like – we've got the answers! See Share your tour photos and videos on Youtube and Flickr, and keep in touch with group members on Facebook, Bebo and Myspace. There are many Tucan Travel communities out there waiting to welcome you, just a few clicks away.

Write a travel diary and get published on our website!

Share your experiences of life on tour and you may be rewarded! Get in touch with us for details through www.tucantravel.com.

We want your photos!

We've taken you to some of the most amazing places on earth – why not share that with the world? Send us high resolution colour photos of your adventures, and you could be published on our website or our brochure. Contact us through www.tucantravel.com.