Friday, March 29: US/ BELIZE CITY

Upon arrival in Belize City, our group will meet and connect with a 30-minute charter flight to Chan Chich lodge on Gallon Jug Estate. In remote north-western Belize, referred to as La Selva Maya, the largest contiguous forest north of the Amazon basin, the lodge is surrounded by pristine forest, and with strong conservation efforts, wildlife here has thrived. Upon arrival you can relax and soak in the surrounding beauty before a welcome dinner at the lodge.

Chan Chich Lodge  (D)

Saturday/Sunday, March 30-31: CHAN CHICH

For the next two days we’ll immerse in the beauty of Belize. The adventure begins on the porch of your cabana where you may see parrots, parakeets, keel-billed toucans, oropendolas, tanagers, and grey fox. Over 350 species of birds have been recorded at Chan Chich. Large birds such as the Crested Guan and Great Curassow are readily seen here and you don’t have to be a “birder” to enjoy this! In addition, all five cat species—jaguar, puma, ocelot, margay and jaguarondi can be found here. We will take guided walks of the trails in this lush forest surrounded by towering trees, delicate orchids, bromeliads, and a variety of ferns. In the evenings we will take a guided night safari on specially designed trucks mounted with stoplights to scope out nocturnal fauna.

Chan Chich Lodge  (2B, 2L, 2D)

Monday, April 1: XUNANTUNICH

Following a breakfast at the lodge and a short charter flight, we will drive to the nearby Xunantunich Maya Site. An impressive well-excavated site, Xunantunich was a thriving Maya city during the Classic Period, 600 to 900 A.D. We reach this major ceremonial center by crossing the Mopan River aboard a hand-cranked car-ferry. Once there, the site provides an impressive view of the entire river valley; its centerpiece, El Castillo, rises 120 feet above the plaza, making it one of the tallest buildings in Belize. Stopping for lunch in a local establishment, we will continue to travel to the Petén jungle in Guatemala where Tikal is located. Once checked in at the hotel, we will have a dinner and lecture before a relaxing evening on your own.  

Hotel Camino Real Tikal  (B,L,D)
Tuesday, April 2: TIKAL

We will explore Tikal, one of the grandest of the Mayan cities throughout the day. Tikal flourished from A.D. 250 to 900, then suddenly collapsed around A.D. 900 and its population vanished. The jungle closed over the ancient metropolis and for a thousand years it lay buried under its cover. Tikal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has been under excavation and reconstruction since the late 1950s and is located within a national park which provides excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing. Plazas, deep reservoirs, carved stelae, and massive altars rise from the rainforest floor. We will visit the Tikal Museum and the Lithic and Stelae Museums to view treasures from the excavations at Tikal.

Hotel Camino Real Tikal (B,L,D)

Wednesday, April 3: LAKE ATITLÁN

After breakfast at the Hotel Camino Real Tikal, we will take a morning flight to Guatemala City and transfer to Lake Atitlán. Stopping at the archaeological site of Iximché that once served as the capital of the Kaqchikel Mayas we will gain a better understanding of Maya beliefs. After a traditional Maya ceremony and lunch we will resume the drive to Atitlán. A breathtaking lake with volcanic panoramas, Atitlán is considered one of the most beautiful volcanic lakes in the world. After our check in, we can visit the village of Panajachel, near the hotel, which is great for walking and seeing the local textiles and handicrafts.

Hotel Atitlán (B,L,D)

Thursday, April 4: SANTA CRUZ/ SAN JUAN LA LAGUNA

Breakfast will be at the hotel before we enjoy the views as we take a boat ride to Santa Cruz, one of the 12 Indian villages located around the lake, all with striking, distinctive dress and traditions. We will walk through the town, see the foot-loom art inside native homes and learn about weaving. After lunch on your own, we will continue by boat to the beautiful town of San Juan La Laguna where the Tz’utujil Maya live, or visit the village of Santiago La Laguna. We will be returning to the hotel with time to explore the beautiful vistas of Lake Atitlán and the lovely gardens of the hotel.

Hotel Atitlán (B,D)
Friday, April 5: ANTIGUA GUATEMALA

Take an optional guided morning walk through the cloud forest behind the hotel before departing for the town of Antigua, Guatemala. We will stop to visit the authentic Indian market of Sololá, a true local experience. The market which overlooks Lake Atitlán is one of Central America’s finest, drawing Indigenous people from all over the highlands. We can wander the range of goods for sale and see the men in their traditional dress of gold-embroidered jackets distinctive of the town and behold stunning mountainside views of the lake. Dinner and evening activities are on your own after we continue to Antigua and check into our hotel.

*Camino Real Antigua* (B,L)

Saturday, April 6: ANTIGUA

At 5,000 feet in a valley surrounded by 14,000-foot volcanoes, Antigua is one of the most charming of the colonial towns of the Americas and it has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This morning’s walking tour starts at the Central Park and includes the Ayuntamiento (Administrative building), Cathedral, Convent of the Capuchinas, and Merced Church, among other sites. We’ll continue to Casa K’Ojom for the preservation of Maya music and instruments, and visit the Centro Cultural La Azotea to see a collection of typical dress from the region.

*Camino Real Antigua* (B,L,D)

Sunday, April 7: ANTIGUA/ US

Transfer to the international airport for your return flight home.

(B)

NOTE: Thursday, March 28:

Participants may arrive in Belize a day ahead of the start of the tour and overnight at the Radisson Fort George Hotel in Belize City. The cost of this optional night and transfer is additional and not included into the trip cost.