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### **‘Semana Santa’ Departure-Guatemala 2006**

Departs April 7th

10 day trip: returns April 16<sup>th</sup> (Antigua and Lake Atitlan)

12 day trip: returns April 18<sup>th</sup> (includes exploration of Yaxhá & Tikal ruins)

#### **Signature Experiences**

- *Positive Impact Visit in Santa Cruz del Quiche* with families benefiting from micro-loans administered through Save the Children. Note: Culture Xplorers contributes to these micro-loan programs through our visits
- *Coffee: Crop to Cup* ½ day immersion experience. We’ll experience it all, from picking coffee ‘cherries’ alongside local workers at an organic coffee finca, to visiting the drying & processing mills, to sipping coffees at a professional tasting
- *Introduction to Mayan Textiles*. Desire, an expert and passionate supporter of Mayan weaving, invites us into her home’s garden for an introduction to Mayan weaving techniques and patterns. Then, we head out to a nearby weaving community to meet the artists responsible for these beautiful works of art.
- *Semana Santa festivities in Antigua*. The scale and color of the holy week celebrations and processions in Antigua are unrivaled in the Western Hemisphere. One of the highlights are the beautiful carpets (alfombras) that are created and destroyed in an equally spectacular manner, especially on Good Friday.
- *Culture Xplorers Immersion Challenge*. Get ready for two hours of fun and interaction with the local people, this time without the help of our guides!
- *Day in the Life of a Guatemalan Farmer*. We’ll visit with Filoberto and his family and begin to understand rural farming life a bit better after visiting his plot of farmland halfway up the flank of Volcano Agua. We’ll also hear Filoberto’s own survival stories from Guatemala’s violent civil conflict.

#### **Thumbnail Itinerary**

Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup>

Overnight in Antigua at Posada de Don Rodrigo or similar hotel – for a preview, please visit

<http://www.posadadedonrodrigo.com/> (Dinner)

Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>

After breakfast and a morning walking orientation in Antigua, we’ll transfer by private van to the stunning Lake Atitlan, famously described by Alex Huxley as the most beautiful lake in the world. Caution: the ride, about 2 hours from Antigua, is on paved, but very curvy mountain roads. If you’re sensitive to car motion, have Dramamine or another motion sickness medication handy.

After lunch, we’ll explore two nearby indigenous communities by boat, Santa Catarina and San Antonio Palopo, before returning to Panajachel for the evening. (Breakfast & Lunch)

Overnight in Panajachel at Posada de Don Rodrigo or similar hotel - for a preview, please visit

<http://www.posadadedonrodrigo.com/>

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Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>

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We'll drive an hour to Chichicastenango to see it at the peak of market day activity. We'll start first with a visit to the church to witness the fascinating syncretism between Catholicism and Mayan beliefs, both of which are practiced inside and outside its walls.

After some time to shop in the world-famous crafts market, we'll continue our drive to Santa Cruz del Quiche to visit with Save the Children in order to learn about their micro-loan programs in the area. We're invited to visit the homes and small business of several of the recipients of these loans. Return in the evening to Panajachel. (Breakfast & Lunch)

Monday, April 10<sup>th</sup>

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"Coffee: from Crop to Cup": we'll start with a contextual discussion of the coffee culture of Guatemala at Crossroads Café, sipping Mike's fresh roasted, organic coffee and home-made cinnamon rolls. Following our brief introduction to coffee, we'll jump into the back of a pick-up truck, the favorite means of local transport, to visit a nearby organic coffee farm, pick coffee when in season, see the drying patios and visit the processing plant. We'll finish with a professional style coffee tasting back at Crossroads. (Breakfast & Lunch)

**Free afternoon** - go horseback riding, kayaking, shopping or just relax and enjoy the magnificent views of one of the world's most beautiful lakes.

Tuesday, April 11<sup>th</sup>

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*Optional:* At approximately 7am, we'll drive a short 15 minutes to Solola market. For those willing to rise early, you'll witness one of Guatemala's most colorful markets, minus the hordes of tourists (as at Chichicastenango). Both men and women still wear the traditional dress here, one of the few villages in Guatemala where the men still do.

Late morning: private boat trip across the lake to Santiago Atitlan. We'll be led by Dolores, a resident of Santiago, though its markets, galleries and churches. This town's history during Guatemala's violent civil conflict is particularly important, and Dolores' story brings us a very personal perspective. She'll also take us to the home of Maximon, a Mayan deity worshipped by many in Santiago and other towns throughout Guatemala. In the late afternoon we'll return to Panajachel. (Breakfast & Lunch)

Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>

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Morning drive to Antigua. **Enjoy a free day in Antigua** just as the Semana Santa activities are warming up. (Breakfast)

Overnight at Posada de Don Rodrigo or similar hotel

Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup>

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'Life of a Farmer' visit with Don Filoberto. We'll meet Filoberto, his wife and their 11 children at their very modest home in San Miguel, a 10-minute drive from Antigua. From there we'll walk accompanied by several mules (these can be used by anyone for whom the 1 ½ hour hike up the foothills of the volcano is too difficult) along the flanks of Volcan Agua, where Filoberto has a plot of farmland.

Once we arrive at Filoberto's small plot halfway up the volcano, we'll enjoy home-made tortillas and guacamole while listening to Filoberto recount his time during the late 80's and early 90's when he brought food and water to the guerilla, risking his life many times.

We'll have an *optional* stroll together at 4:30am (Friday morning)! Believe it or not, Antigua is full of pre-dawn activity as the most stunning 'alfombras' (carpets) are prepared for the morning's processions. For those who choose to rise this early, this is a very special atmosphere.

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Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup>

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**Enjoy a free day in Antigua**, but don't think there'll be nothing to do! The celebrations are at their frenzied peak today, with multiple processions throughout the town all day long. Use extra caution today, as there are huge crowds and as with large crowds anywhere in the world, pickpockets follow. Do not take valuables of any kind into the streets!

Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>

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Today we'll dedicate to the Mayan weaving tradition. Desire will be our day leader as we get a morning overview at Casa de Artes, her gallery and home in Antigua. We'll follow-up that introduction with a visit to a local weaving community, visiting the homes of several weavers. We'll finish back at Casa de Artes, invited to lunch at Desire's home.

Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup>

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Our transfer to Guatemala City will depart after an early breakfast. Those opting for the Tikal extension will board a flight to Flores, others will return to the US or Europe.

### **Tikal Extension (Optional)**

**Additional cost: \$470 includes RT internal airfare**

Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup>

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Once arrived and settled in, we'll set out to explore the site of Yaxhá. Here we'll see the latest archaeological restorations taking place, tour the site and enjoy wine, cheese and sunset at Bat Temple. (Breakfast & Lunch)

Lodging at Ni-tun lodge – for a preview visit [www.nitun.com](http://www.nitun.com)

Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup>

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We'll explore Tikal in the company of resident experts Bernie Mittelstaedt or Lorena Castillo, with a break in our explorations for a picnic lunch at the ruins. Return to Ni-tun for dinner and lodging. (Breakfast & Lunch)

Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>

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After breakfast we'll have a transfer to the Flores airport and a flight to Guatemala City in time for your connections back to the US and Europe. (Breakfast)

### **Details:**

- Max. travelers: 12 (6 minimum for this *Founder's Journey*)
- Length of trip: 10 or 12 days
- Activity level: moderately active. Participants must be able to walk comfortably for 2- 3 hours per day at altitudes around 5,000 to 6,000 feet. There is some hilly terrain and cobblestone streets in Antigua. There is one strenuous hike halfway up a volcano. Note: while mules are available for assistance going up, they are not available for the way down.