



A Midwifery Study Tour of Guatemala: Maya Midwifery & Traditional Practices

Quetzaltenango | Lake Atitlán | Antigua | Tikal National Park

28th September to 10th October 2027

CPD Hours: 30

Guatemala

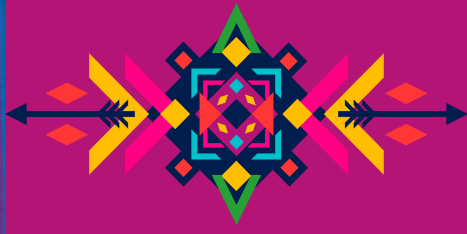


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SYNOPSIS:

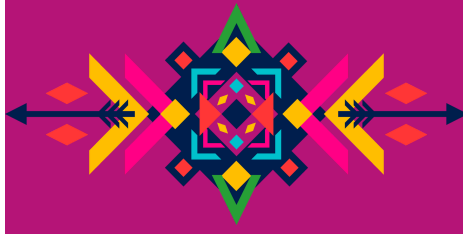
This immersive study tour explores pregnancy, birth, postpartum and women's health care in Guatemala, with a particular focus on Maya midwifery traditions and community-based maternal care. Participants will explore how Guatemala is working to provide accessible, culturally responsive care and support women who may otherwise face barriers to healthcare.

Through visits to birth centres, health posts, hospitals, community organisations and midwifery programs, participants will gain insight into the role of the Comadrona (traditional midwife), the provision of culturally safe care, and the ways traditional knowledge and biomedical healthcare can work alongside one another to enhance women's care and experiences.

Importantly, this study tour encourages participants to look beyond simply observing another healthcare system. It challenges you to consider what Australian midwives and women's healthcare professionals can learn from our Guatemalan colleagues. How might principles applied in another setting influence your own midwifery practice in Australia? How do these approaches align with Australian standards, and can they contribute to more culturally safe and responsive care?

Across Guatemala and around the world, women may experience barriers to accessing skilled maternity care. In Australia, some women choose to birth outside conventional maternity settings, while others experience unexpected or unplanned birth before reaching their intended place of care. Our education program will explore how midwifery care can contribute to better public health and emergency outcomes across the continuum of care.

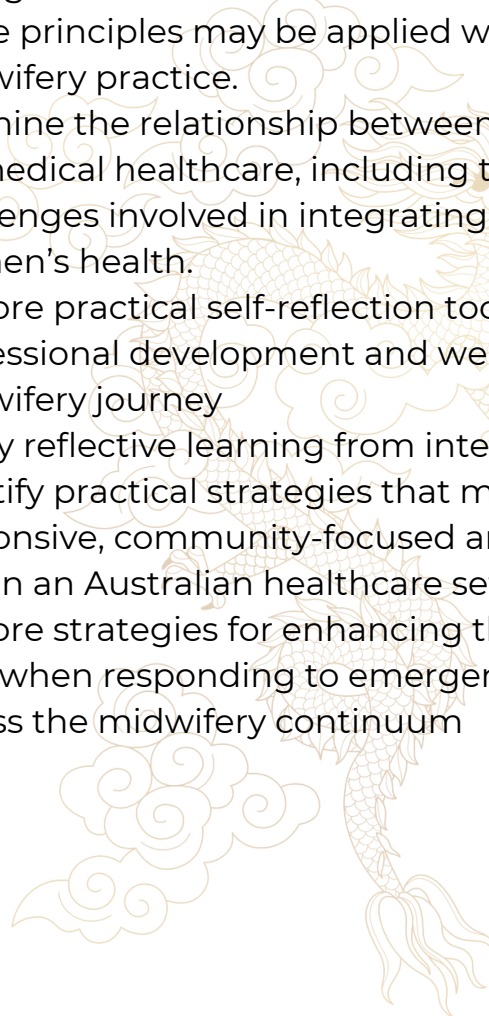




Participants will explore strategies to enhance skilled attendance, strengthen clinical decision-making and respond effectively to emerging risks. The program will also incorporate practical self-reflection tools to support ongoing professional development, resilience and wellbeing throughout the midwifery journey.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Compare and critically reflect on traditional Maya midwifery practices and contemporary Australian maternity care, identifying similarities, differences and opportunities for professional learning.
- Explain the role of the comadrona within Maya communities and examine how community-based, relationship-centred care can contribute to women's experiences of pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period.
- Explore culturally safe and respectful maternity care, considering how cultural beliefs, spirituality, family structures and traditional practices influence women's healthcare choices and experiences.
- Evaluate approaches to continuity of care and community engagement observed in Guatemala and consider how these principles may be applied within Australian midwifery practice.
- Examine the relationship between traditional and biomedical healthcare, including the opportunities and challenges involved in integrating different approaches to women's health.
- Explore practical self-reflection tools to support your professional development and wellbeing throughout your midwifery journey
- Apply reflective learning from international practice to identify practical strategies that may enhance culturally responsive, community-focused and woman-centred care within an Australian healthcare setting.
- Explore strategies for enhancing the impact of midwifery care when responding to emergencies and identified risks across the midwifery continuum



PRESENTER:



LORIN VELTKAMP

BNSc, Grad Dip Mid, Master of Public Health

Lorin is a Registered Midwife currently employed at Townsville University Hospital in Queensland. Alongside her clinical practice, she works in multidisciplinary healthcare education, supporting learning across diverse professional settings.

Over the past twenty years, Lorin has held a wide range of clinical roles, including Caseload Midwife in a Birth Centre, Clinical Midwife at a tertiary referral centre, and Midwifery Educator. Her career has taken her across the globe — from Thursday Island in Australia's far north to the Arctic Circle in Canada.

Lorin has led quality improvement initiatives, developed clinical curricula for online education modules, and presented internationally at conferences, including CAPWHN. Her professional experience also includes public health and disaster management roles, as well as several years working in prehospital care.

She has also lived and worked extensively in the Middle East, South America, and Sub-Saharan Africa, bringing a truly global perspective to her midwifery practice and education. Lorin has made multiple trips to Guatemala and brings a deep appreciation of the country's culture, healthcare systems, and midwifery practice. She looks forward to sharing her knowledge, insights, and experiences with colleagues during this study tour.



OUR CONVENOR:



Samantha Kennington

Education at Sea & Travel Direct Australia

Samantha Kennington is the Manager of Education at Sea and Travel Direct Australia, where she oversees the development and delivery of international study tours and travel programs for nurses, midwives and other healthcare professionals.

With a background in event management, Samantha brings a practical, hands-on approach to organising complex programs and creating memorable group experiences. She is known for her attention to detail, high standards and ability to bring together all the elements that make a group experience run seamlessly.

She particularly enjoys the social side of group travel — getting to know guests, sharing experiences and making sure everyone feels comfortable, informed and included along the way.

Known for her friendly nature, dry sense of humour and calm approach, Samantha looks forward to welcoming you to South Africa and sharing what promises to be a memorable journey together.





INCLUSIONS:

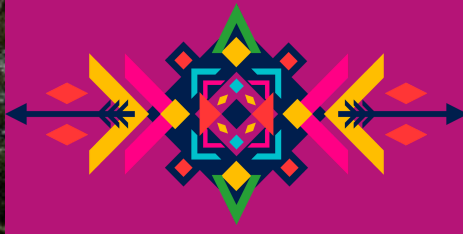
TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Accommodation with Breakfast
- All land transportation in private vehicle with air conditioning and passenger insurance
- Welcome Reception at Hotel Barceló
- Private Tour to Iximché: Private visit to the Iximché Archaeological Site accompanied by a bilingual guide, with entrance fees included.
- Lunch in Santiago Atitlán: Lunch at a local restaurant in Santiago Atitlán.
- Cultural Day in San Juan La Laguna: Cultural experience in San Juan La Laguna, including a cacao workshop and lunch.
- Private Tour to Tikal National Park: Private guided visit to Tikal National Park with a bilingual guide and entrance fees included, as well as lunch (beverages not included).
- Full-Day Antigua Experience: Full-day private experience in Antigua Guatemala accompanied by a bilingual guide, including lunch.
- Domestic flight round trip Guatemala City – Santa Elena – Guatemala City. Class Plus including 23kg of checked baggage and 1 piece of handluggage.

PROGRAM INCLUSIONS:

- An extensive program based on current best practice
- Dedicated Space for expert presentations and reflection
- Coffee breaks and lunches on presentation days
- Education content that meets the same exacting standards as anything offered in an Australian program
- Presenters that are excited to be able to share their skill, knowledge, and passion
- An online library filled to the brim with educational content that allows you to create your own learning experience
- A Registration Reception including complimentary drinks where you can meet other Attendees and network with Convenors and Presenter/s
- A Transcript reflecting all education sessions, presentations and hospital/health centre site visits
- A Certificate of Completion identifying the CPD hours attached to the Program for you to include in your CPD Evidence Portfolio





FULL ITINERARY:

Day 1: 28th Sept 2027

Hotel Barceló, Guatemala City

Inclusions:

Drinks reception

Welcome to Guatemala, the land of eternal spring!

Arrive in Guatemala City, where your private driver will be waiting to welcome you and transfer you comfortably to your hotel. Settle in, unwind after your journey, and enjoy your first taste of Guatemala before the study tour begins.

5pm to 6pm: Welcome Reception

Begin your Guatemalan adventure with a relaxed welcome reception at the Hotel Barceló. This is a great opportunity to meet your fellow travellers and midwives, make introductions and get to know the people you'll be sharing the journey with.

Enjoy a selection of local-inspired finger foods, refreshing soft drinks and cocktails from the open bar while soaking up the warm Guatemalan hospitality.

Take some time to relax, enjoy a drink and connect with your fellow participants before the study tour officially begins. It's the perfect way to break the ice and start the adventure together.

Day 2: 29th Sept 2027

Hotel Pensión Bonifaz, Quetzaltenango (Xela)

Inclusions:

Breakfast

8:30am: Depart Guatemala City

After breakfast at your hotel, meet your private driver and begin your journey west towards Quetzaltenango, affectionately known as Xela.

Your journey through the Guatemalan highlands includes a fascinating stop at Iximché, one of Guatemala's most important pre-Columbian Maya archaeological sites and the former capital of the Kaqchikel Maya kingdom.



DAY 2: Continued...

Explore the ancient plazas, ceremonial areas and remains of this remarkable site while learning about its history, cultural significance and connection to Maya civilisation.

After exploring Iximché, continue through the scenic highlands towards Quetzaltenango, taking in the changing landscapes and getting your first glimpse of life beyond Guatemala City.

Following your visit to Iximché, stop in Tecpán for lunch at Katok, a popular Guatemalan restaurant located along the Pan-American Highway. Known for its traditional cuisine and local flavours, it provides a great opportunity to enjoy some authentic Guatemalan food along the journey.

Lunch is not included and is at your own expense.

Day 3: 30th Sept 2027

Hotel Pensión Bonifaz,
Quetzaltenango (Xela)

Inclusions:

Breakfast, Lunch

CPD Hours:

8 Face to Face

Naye Xjaw / Maya Midwifery International

7:15am: Depart Hotel

Today, venture beyond Quetzaltenango to the rural community of San Miguel Sigüilá for a special visit to Naye Xjaw / Maya Midwifery International.

8am: Meet the team

Begin the day by meeting the team and local midwives, followed by an introduction to the work of Naye Xjaw and Maya Midwifery International and the role of traditional midwifery within the local community.

9am: Tour of the Birth Centre

Explore the birth centre and learn about the environment in which women receive care throughout pregnancy, labour and birth. Discover how the centre supports women within a community-based model of maternity care and how traditional Maya midwifery knowledge and practices are incorporated into the care provided.

During the visit, consider the role of the birth environment in supporting women's physical, emotional and cultural needs, as well as the importance of continuity, trust and relationship-building between women and their midwives. This provides an opportunity to reflect on how different models of maternity care can influence women's experiences and outcomes, and to



Consider what elements may be relevant to contemporary midwifery practice in Australia.

10am: Break

10:30am: Visit to a Comadrona's Home

Visit the home of Comadrona Juanita Cajola and gain an insight into the role of the traditional midwife within the community. Comadronas are highly respected community-based birth attendants who provide care and support to women throughout pregnancy, labour, birth and the postnatal period.

Their role extends beyond clinical care, incorporating traditional Maya knowledge, cultural practices, family and community support, and an understanding of the individual needs of the women they serve.

12:30pm: Ancestral Maya Lunch

Enjoy a traditional Maya lunch and experience some of the local food and traditions.

1:30pm: Prenatal, Traditional and Spiritual Practices

Continue exploring Maya approaches to pregnancy and maternity care, including traditional and spiritual practices and their place within the community. Learn how Maya beliefs, cultural traditions and ancestral knowledge can influence the way pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period are understood and experienced by women and their families.

Consider how traditional practices are incorporated alongside the care provided by Comadronas, and the importance of spirituality, family, community and cultural identity throughout the maternity journey. This provides an opportunity to reflect on how a woman's cultural beliefs and values can influence her healthcare choices and expectations, and how midwives can provide respectful, culturally safe care while recognising and valuing different understandings of health, pregnancy and birth.

Participants will also be encouraged to consider how these principles translate to Australian practice, particularly when caring for women from diverse cultural backgrounds and working collaboratively with women, families, communities and other healthcare professionals.



DAY 3: Continued...

3:30pm: Labour & Delivery Care

Learn more about the care provided to women during labour and birth, including traditional approaches and the role of the Comadrona. Explore how Comadronas support women throughout labour, drawing on their experience, traditional knowledge and understanding of the individual woman and her family.

Consider the ways in which Maya approaches to labour and birth may differ from those commonly experienced within Australian maternity settings, including the role of the family and community, cultural and spiritual practices, and the importance of creating a supportive and familiar environment for women during birth.

5:30pm: Return to Xela

Day 4: 1st Oct 2027

Hotel Pensión Bonifaz,
Quetzaltenango (Xela)

Inclusions:

Breakfast, Lunch

CPD Hours:

8 Face to Face

7:15am: Depart Quetzaltenango

7:45am: Arrive at Naye Xjaw

Begin the day at Naye Xjaw and prepare for another immersive day exploring Maya approaches to maternal and women's healthcare.

8am: Visit & Tour a Community Health Post

Visit a local health post in the surrounding community and learn how healthcare is delivered at a grassroots level. Explore the role of community-based services, accessibility and the relationship between local healthcare providers, women and families.

10am: Break

10:30am: Postpartum Care & Sweat Lodge Ceremony

Explore traditional Maya approaches to postpartum recovery and healing, including the significance of the sweat lodge ceremony and the use of fire, water and heat in supporting women after birth. Consider how cultural beliefs and traditional practices can influence a woman's experience of recovery and wellbeing.

12:30pm: Ancestral Maya Lunch



DAY 4: Continued...

Enjoy a traditional Maya lunch and learn more about the cultural importance of food, nutrition and nourishment during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

1:30pm: Nutrition, Family Planning & Breastfeeding

Explore approaches to nutrition, breastfeeding and family planning guided by ancestral Maya knowledge. Consider the role of education, family and community in supporting women's health and reproductive choices.

3:30pm: Integrating Traditional & Biomedical Midwifery

Examine how traditional Maya midwifery knowledge and biomedical healthcare can work alongside one another. Discuss the opportunities and challenges of bringing different approaches together while maintaining respectful, culturally safe and woman-centred care.

5:30pm: Return to Xela

Day 5: 2nd Oct 2027

Porta Hotel del Lago,
Panajachel

Inclusions:

Breakfast

CPD hours:

4 Face to face

4:45am: Depart Hotel

An early start this morning as we make our way to a ceremonial site to experience an important aspect of Maya culture and spirituality.

5:15am: Arrive at Ceremonial Site

Arrive at the ceremonial site and prepare for a unique cultural experience.

5:30am: Maya Ceremony

Participate respectfully in a traditional Maya ceremony and gain an insight into the spiritual and cultural practices that continue to play an important role within Maya communities. Consider how spirituality, connection to nature and cultural identity can influence approaches to pregnancy, birth, healing and wellbeing.

7:30am: Packed Breakfast at the Ceremonial Site

Enjoy breakfast together at the ceremonial site before continuing the morning's learning.



Day 5: Continued...

8:00am: Maya Cosmovision & The Calling of the Comadrona

Explore the influence of Maya cosmovision on midwifery practice and the cultural significance of the *comadrona*. Learn about the traditional calling to become a midwife and the knowledge, responsibilities and relationship with the community that accompany this role. Reflect on how culture, spirituality and community shape the way midwifery is understood and practised.

10:00am: Depart for Lake Atitlán

After the ceremony, continue your journey through the scenic highlands toward Lake Atitlán. Upon arrival in Panajachel, you will be transferred to your hotel, where you can settle in and enjoy your first views of the lake and its surrounding volcanoes.

Afternoon:

Enjoy a relaxed afternoon at your own pace in Panajachel, the lively gateway to Lake Atitlán. Take some time to explore the town, stroll along the lakeside, browse local handicrafts and artisan shops, or simply relax and enjoy the spectacular views of the surrounding volcanoes.

You may also choose to enjoy a leisurely coffee or drink while taking in the scenery, or ask your guide for recommendations on local experiences and places to explore.

The afternoon is yours to discover Panajachel and enjoy the beauty of Lake Atitlán at your own rhythm.

Day 6: 3rd Oct 2027

Porta Hotel del Lago,
Panajachel

Inclusions:

Breakfast
Lunch (Drinks at own
expense)

CPD hours:

2 Face to face

Lake Atitlán | Santiago Atitlán

Morning – Boat Transfer from Panajachel to Santiago Atitlán

Enjoy a scenic boat ride across the beautiful waters of Lake Atitlán, travelling to the lakeside community of Santiago Atitlán. Take in spectacular views of the surrounding volcanoes and traditional communities along the shoreline.

TBC: Visit Hospitalito

Visit Hospitalito in Santiago Atitlán and gain an insight into healthcare delivery within a rural Guatemalan community. Explore the services provided to local women, families and the wider community, and consider the challenges of delivering



DAY 6: Continued...

accessible healthcare in geographically and economically diverse settings.

The visit provides an opportunity to compare the Guatemalan healthcare environment with Australian practice, particularly around access to care, community health, maternal healthcare and culturally responsive practice.

12pm: Group Lunch

Take a break from the morning's activities and enjoy lunch at Restaurante El Maná, a welcoming local spot where you can relax and enjoy a delicious meal in a laid-back atmosphere.

Afternoon – Free Time in Santiago Atitlán

The afternoon is yours to enjoy at your own pace. Explore the town, browse local markets and artisan shops, or simply relax and take in the atmosphere of this beautiful lakeside community.

4pm: Boat Transfer to Panajachel

Meet at the Municipal Dock for your return journey to Panajachel.

Day 7: 4th Oct 2027

Porta Hotel del Lago,
Panajachel

Inclusions:

Breakfast
Lunch (Drinks at own
expense)

Cultural day in San Juan la Laguna

We will do a short 10–15 minute walk from the hotel to Tzanjuyu Dock in Panajachel, where you'll meet your local guide and board the boat to San Juan La Laguna.

Spend the day exploring the culture, traditions and community of San Juan La Laguna, a village with strong Maya heritage and a rich tradition of local arts and crafts.

Cacao Workshop – The Gold of the Maya

Discover the cultural significance and history of cacao, from its pre-Hispanic origins through to its place in contemporary Maya culture. Learn about traditional methods of roasting and grinding cacao before creating your own artisanal chocolate bar. Along the way, sample cacao-based drinks and take part in interactive activities.



Lunch with a Local Family

Enjoy lunch with a local family, providing an opportunity to experience traditional food and hospitality within the community.

Afternoon – Explore San Juan La Laguna

Take a guided tour through the village, discovering colourful murals depicting spiritual and cultural themes within Maya culture, as well as local shops, galleries and artisan traditions.

Return to Panajachel

At the end of the afternoon, return by boat to Panajachel and walk back to the hotel.

Day 8: 5th Oct 2027

Porta Hotel, Antigua

Inclusions:

Breakfast

CPD Hours:

2 Face to face

8am: Depart Panajachel for Antigua

After your stay at Lake Atitlán, depart Panajachel for Antigua Guatemala with a comfortable private transfer through the scenic landscapes of Guatemala's highlands.

Sit back and enjoy the journey as you leave Lake Atitlán behind, travelling through mountain landscapes and rural communities on your way to Antigua, Guatemala's beautiful former capital and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Arrival in Antigua

Arrive at your hotel and enjoy some time to settle in and have lunch before this afternoon's visit.

2pm: Asociación Manos Abiertas

Travel from Antigua to Asociación Manos Abiertas, a women-centred birth and women's health organisation established to improve access to culturally and linguistically appropriate healthcare for women in rural Guatemala.

During the visit, learn how Manos Abiertas brings together midwifery, reproductive healthcare and community-based services, supporting women through pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period, while also providing services including family planning, cervical cancer screening, STI care and lactation support.



DAY 8: Continued...

We will explore how the organisation works to reach women who may face barriers to accessing healthcare, including through outreach and mobile clinics in remote communities. Reflect on the role of midwives in improving maternal and reproductive health outcomes and consider how access, cultural safety, continuity of care and woman-centred practice translate across different healthcare settings.

After the visit, return to Antigua and enjoy the remainder of the evening at leisure.

Day 9: 6th Oct 2027

Porta Hotel, Antigua

Inclusions:

Breakfast
Coffee breaks
Lunch

CPD Hours:

7 Face to face

8:30am to 10:30am: Lorin Veltkamp

Coming soon...

10:30am to 11am: Break

11am to 12:30pm: Lorin Veltkamp

Coming soon...

12:30pm to 1:30pm: Networking Lunch

1:30pm to 3pm: WINGS Guatemala

We will hear from WINGS Guatemala, a non-profit organisation working to improve access to reproductive health education and services for underserved communities across Guatemala.

Founded in 2001, WINGS works primarily with rural, Indigenous and low-income communities, providing reproductive health education and clinical services through mobile units, community health promoters, youth leaders and clinics. Their work includes family planning, contraception, cervical cancer screening and reproductive health education, with a strong focus on ensuring women, girls and young people can exercise



DAY 9: Continued...

their sexual and reproductive rights.

WINGS takes a rights-based, community-centred approach, actively involving Indigenous women and girls and recognising the cultural, geographic and social barriers that can affect access to healthcare.

Participants will gain a broader perspective on reproductive health, access to care, community engagement and women's health in Guatemala, while considering how these challenges and approaches compare with Australian practice.

3.30pm to 4pm: Break

4pm to 5pm: Lorin Veltkamp

Coming soon...

Day 10: 7th Oct 2027

Porta Hotel, Antigua

Inclusions:

Breakfast

Lunch (Drinks at own expense)

Morning: Culinary & Coffee Tour

Today, enjoy a full-day cultural experience exploring the food, traditions and coffee of the Antigua region.

Traditional Cooking Workshop

Begin with a hands-on cooking workshop and learn how to prepare pepián, one of Guatemala's traditional dishes. Discover the ingredients, techniques and cultural traditions behind this much-loved Guatemalan meal before enjoying the dish you have prepared for lunch.

Afternoon: Coffee Plantation Tour

Explore a local coffee plantation dedicated to fair coffee trade and supporting local families. Learn about the journey from coffee plant to cup, the work involved in producing coffee and the importance of fair trade to the local community.

Finish the experience with a freshly brewed cup of local coffee and a small bag to take home.



DAY 10: Continued...

4pm: Return to Antigua

Return to the meeting point in Antigua and enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure.

Day 11: 8th Oct 2027

Hotel Camino Real, Tikal

Inclusions:

Breakfast

An early start this morning as we travel from Antigua to Guatemala City for your domestic flight to Flores.

9:30am: Domestic Flight to Flores

Board your flight from La Aurora International Airport to Mundo Maya International Airport in Flores, the gateway to Guatemala's northern Petén region.

Arrival in Flores – Transfer to El Remate

On arrival, meet your local driver and travel to El Remate, a peaceful lakeside village situated on the shores of Lake Petén Itzá and surrounded by the lush landscapes of the Petén region.

Settle into your accommodation and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure. Relax, take in the tranquil surroundings or explore the local area before tomorrow's visit to Tikal National Park.

Day 12: 9th Oct 2027

Hotel Camino Real, Tikal

Inclusions:

Breakfast

Lunch (Drinks at own expense)

Tikal National Park

7:30am: Depart for Tikal National Park

Today, visit one of Guatemala's most remarkable cultural and historical sites. Travel approximately 45 minutes from El Remate to Tikal National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the largest archaeological sites of the ancient Maya civilisation.

Guided Tour of Tikal:

Explore the immense archaeological site with a bilingual guide, visiting ancient temples, plazas and ceremonial complexes hidden within the surrounding rainforest. Learn about the history, achievements and culture of the ancient Maya civilisation and gain a deeper appreciation of the cultural heritage that continues to shape Guatemala today.



DAY 12: Continued...

Lunch:

Enjoy lunch during the day's exploration before continuing your visit to this extraordinary archaeological site.

Afternoon – Return to El Remate

Return to your hotel in El Remate in the afternoon and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure.

Day 13: 10th Oct 2027

Inclusions:

Breakfast

Transfer to Mundo Maya International Airport

After breakfast, depart El Remate for Mundo Maya International Airport in Flores for your domestic flight to Guatemala City.

TBC: Domestic Flight – Flores to Guatemala City

Board your domestic flight to La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City. Your flight departure time is currently TBC.

When arranging your international flight home, please allow sufficient time between your domestic and international flights for baggage collection, check-in, security and airport procedures.

International Departure

We say our final goodbyes – Safe Travels





EXCLUSIONS:

- Flights to and from Australia
- Travel insurance
- Meals not listed in the itinerary
- Drinks
- Tips and gratuities
- Personal expenses (laundry, souvenirs, minibar, etc.)
- Additional tours and excursions, to be booked on location according to your own preference.
- Departure airport transfer

COST:

Twin Share	\$6495 per person
Single Supplement	\$1260



INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INSURANCE:

We're happy to provide airfare quotes for any of your travel needs—completely obligation-free.

Booking your flights and travel insurance through Travel Direct Australia / Education At Sea means everything is organised in one place for your convenience. It also allows all associated travel expenses to appear on a single statement, making things simpler at tax time.

We strongly recommend arranging travel insurance at the time of booking to ensure you're covered from the outset.

