

Secrets of the Maya – Belize and Guatemala Photography Adventure 2027 Itinerary

Nature Photography Adventures



Day	Activity	Lodging	Meals on your own
Dec 3	Arrival and Transfer to Mystic River Lodge in Western Belize. The lodge sits above the Macal River and is an oasis for birds and wildlife. Organic produce makes the short journey from their garden to your table. The transfer will take roughly 2.5 hours as you journey from the international airport along the coast and then inland. Orientation and Dinner at the lodge.	Mystic River Lodge	D
Dec 4	Cahal Pech and Xunantunich, lunch in San Ignacio After a hearty breakfast, we'll make a short journey to Cahal Pech, a small but important Mayan site overlooking the Macal River and close its confluence with the Mopan River (together they form the Belize River). This site will introduce us to the Mayan civilization – and also provides some striking compositional opportunities. You'll also find birds here – and more! We'll find lunch in San Ignacio, just down the hill from Cahal Pech. In the afternoon we'll cross the Mopan River on an old hand-cranked ferry and ascend a steep hill to the Mayan site of Xunantunich. There are some really fun compositions to be made here – and a lot to learn! When we're finished, we'll descend the hill, cross the river on the ferry and head back through San Ignacio and back to our lodge. We will be outside the van for ferry crossings and will be able to photograph large iguanas in the trees riverside and the ferry itself. Dinner at the lodge.	Mystic River Lodge	D
Dec 5	Caracol and Rio Frio After an early breakfast, we'll head into the backcountry on a long drive to Caracol. Tucked into a dense rainforest, this Mayan City was once among the most powerful in the Mayan world. It even conquered Tikal. There is a lot to see and photograph here – including two huge specimens of ceiba trees – trees sacred in the Mayan realm. We'll have lunch at the site before working our way down through the rainforest and Pine Ridge areas. We will make a stop at the Rio Frio Cave – one of the easiest caves you will ever visit, it is more like a tunnel with a stream running through it. There is a lot to photograph and learn at this stop. We'll be back at the lodge for dinner.	Mystic River Lodge	D

Dec 6	Butterflies and Barton Creek After breakfast, we'll make a relatively short journey to a small but powerful butterfly center tucked into the rainforest. It's macro time! You'll be amazed at the compositions you can make of both the butterflies and their life stages. And, outside, they have a great set of hummingbird feeders – and the photographic opportunities continue! Another short drive will take us to Barton Creek, which has its headwaters in a cave. We'll lunch near the opening and then take a gentle canoe ride into the cave. Bring a flash and you can take images of the formations as you pass them in your canoe. We'll also find artifacts inside the cave. The entrance is really nice to photograph from both the inside and outside. Dinner at the lodge. And, pack for our journey to Tikal.	Mystic River Lodge	D
Dec 7	Depart for Tikal, Yaxha on the way Another early breakfast – and then we'll load our vehicle and head to the border with Guatemala. You'll need your passport and some cash to cross the border. We'll meet our Guatemala guide and board a new vehicle for our journey inside Guatemala. Our first stop will be the Mayan site of Yaxha. This site has a wealth of nature and wonderful photographic opportunities with the designs of the Mayan structures. Look for both howler and spider monkeys here – and some special birds! Lunch will either be at Yaxha or along the way. We'll make it to Tikal in the afternoon. Tikal sits in the middle of a huge Biosphere Reserve – think a wealth of flora and fauna. After moving into our rooms we have options for photography close to our lodge – or a short foray into the archaeological site. Dinner at the Tikal lodge	Tikal	
Dec 8	Tikal all day Depending on the weather and the group – we may choose to make an early entry into Tikal, returning for breakfast. Or we may opt for an early breakfast and a longer block of time in the site. Inside the archaeological site you may see interesting birds, reptiles, and primates. When you come around a corner and a huge temple dominates the scene – the real magic begins. In the years that we have wandered Tikal, searching for great camera angles, the two of us have developed favorite spots we really want to share with you. You'll also want the guide's interpretation – mainly in the big plaza. And every creature that comes close. You will have the freedom to stick close to the guide, follow us, or strike off on your own. We'll set a lunch time to be back at the lodge. We'll head back up into the archaeological site in the afternoon. Same strategy. Dinner and overnight at the Tikal lodge	Tikal	

Dec 9	Tikal, with late afternoon return to Mystic We have one more morning in Tikal. We'll work out a breakfast strategy based on the previous day's accomplishments. Know that you could spend a week in Tikal and never see enough! We'll work with our guide on a lunch and departure schedule. Remember we have a border to cross on the way back. We expect to be back at Mystic River Lodge in the late afternoon. Dinner at the lodge	Mystic River Lodge	D
Dec 10	El Pilar and VIP tour of Raptor Center Breakfast at the lodge This day won't have as long a drive! We're headed to a very special Mayan site – El Pilar. This site was (and is being) excavated by a friend of ours – with a strong focus on how those who were not “elite” lived. It's not as “prepared” as the other sites on our list – and it's very easy to see both how individual families lived – and how nature reclaimed the site. We have also had great experiences with nature here – exciting birds, foxes, monkeys, soldier ants, stingless bees, and more! After El Pilar, we'll find lunch in San Ignacio. We have a great spot in mind! Then, another special treat. We have a VIP tour of the Belize Raptor Center. These special people tend to injured raptors with the goal of releasing them in the wild. They also house some rescued raptors that aren't capable of that return – and use those to educate school and community groups. For us, there will be the opportunity to make close up images of birds that are usually beyond the reach of our long lenses! And, you might even get to hold one or two! Back to Mystic River Lodge for dinner and overnight.	Mystic River Lodge	D
Dec 11	At ease (on grounds photography, spa, shopping outing, etc.) We have kept this day open. We have a vehicle at our disposal – and flexibility. There is a pool and a spa that might call you. There are many on-the-grounds images you might want to make. There is an amazing gift shop you might want to visit. Or, we might cook up another fun outing... Lunch to be determined Dinner at the lodge. And, alas, packing.	Mystic River Lodge	D
Dec 12	Transfer to outgoing flights Breakfast at the lodge. Then transfers to outgoing flights. We're likely to be grouped by departure times for those flights.	None included	

Notes: Laundry is available for a fee.