

Guatemala



Three vertical bands of light blue, white, and light blue with a coat of arms in the center ; the coat of arms has a green and red quetzal (sacred Mayan bird) and a scroll with the words “Libertad 15 de septiembre de 1821” on crossed rifles and crossed swords both framed by a green wreath.

Official name: República de Guatemala; etymology: Guatemala > Goathemala (Mayan for “land of many trees)
Capital: Guatemala
National bird: Quetzal
Government: constitutional democratic republic
Independence day: 15 de septiembre 1821
President: President Alvaro Colom Caballeros (4 year term)
Legislature: Congreso de la República (unicameral)
Political parties: 14; president’s party: GANA (alliance of small parties)
Life expectancy: men, 68; women, 72
Literacy: 70%
Money: Quetzal (8.2 / \$1.0 US)
Internet code: .gt
Internet users: 450,000 (2004); 800,000 (2007)
Population:
13,500,000 (2010)
Birth rate: 5 times the death rate
Below poverty line: 75%

Mestizo: 60% (called “ladino” in Guatemala)
K'iche 9.1%, (“quiché” in Spanish)
Kaqchikel 8.4%,
Mam 7.9%,
Q'eqchi 6.3%
Other Mayan 8.6%
Other 0.1%

Languages:

Spanish 60%,
Amerindian languages 40%:
23 Amerindian languages (Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi, Mam,
Garifuna, Xinca)

Religions:

Roman Catholic: 75%
Evangelical Protestant: 20%
Indigenous Mayan beliefs: 5%

History:

2,000 B.C.E. – 1,000 C.E.

Maya civilization in Guatemala and surrounding regions
centering on Petén Itzá.

1,000 Collapse of Mayan empire for unknown reasons.

1485 (c.)-1541 Pedro de Alvarado.

1524 Conquest of Guatemala by Pedro de Alvarado; Hernán
Cortés.

1521 – 1821 Spanish colony of Capitanía General de Goatemala
(southern Mexico to Costa Rica)

1523 – 1527 Alvarado led the Spanish conquest of Guatemala over the
Mayan inhabitants with 120 horsemen, 300 Spanish
soldiers, and hundreds of native Mexican fighters
from Cholula and Tlaxcala. (For a Renaissance
painting of Alvarado, see: => [Wikipedia](#).)

1525 - 1541 Alvarado was governor of Guatemala under the
authorization of king Carlos I(V) of Spain. He was
name Adelantado de La Florida and Knight of
Santiago (1527).

1541 Alvarado, one of the most brutal of all Spanish
conquistadors, died when he was crushing during a
mudslide from the Antigua volcano Agua (*agua*
means water; see: => [Antigua #6](#)). He was first
buried in Mexico, but at the end of the 16th century
his remains were reinterred in Catedral de Santiago
in Antigua (see image embedded in : = [Antigua #5](#)).

1543 – 1773	Capital settled at Antigua until earthquake destroyed it. The city was first named Santiago de los Caballeros (St. James of the Knights). In the same year, construction of Antigua's Catedral de Santiago was begun.
1697	Final defeat of the last unconquered Mayas at Lake Petén Itzá (see upper center on map above) or, alternatively, final victory (?) of the Spanish colonial forces.
1773	Capital moved to Guatemala
1821	Guatemalan independence (accompanying Mexican independence)
1822 – 1840	Guatemala part of Central American confederation
1840	Guatemala separates from confederation; Guatemala claims Belize
1899 – 1974	Miguel Angel Asturias (Guatemala's greatest writer)
1925	Asturias translated the <i>Popol Vuh</i> into Spanish
1931 – 1944	Jorge Ubico, dictator
	United Fruit Company controls 42% of Guatemalan land
1946	<i>El señor presidente</i> (novel by Miguel Angel Asturias). For passages from this novel, see: => El señor presidente .
1949	<i>Hombres de maíz</i> (early novel by Asturias in style of realismo mágico)
1951 – 1954	Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán (1913 – 1971): first president under universal suffrage; overthrown by CIA <i>golpe de estado</i>
1960 – 1996	Guerrilla war: 100,000 dead; 1,000,000 refugees; period of death squads
1982 – 1983	Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt, dictator
1985	Current constitution adopted
1991	Guatemala recognizes Belize independence
1992	Rigoberta Menchú wins Nobel Peace Prize (indigenous human rights activist)
1993-1996	President: Roberto Leon Carpio.
1996	Peace agreement ending the conflict (100,000 dead, 1 million refugees)
2004	Oscar Berger Perdomo elected president.
2008	Álvaro Colom Caballeros elected president.
2010	(May) First Tropical storm of 2010 hurricane season (Agatha) causes more than 150 deaths and a giant sinkhole in downtown Guatemala City; Reuters' photo:



2012 Otto Pérez Molina (b. 1950) elected president; leader of the right wing Partido Patriota. Before entering politics, he was an army officer and general, Director of Military Intelligence, Chief of Staff for President Roberto Leon Carpio and a military representative in the 1990s that led to the Guatemalan Peace Accord of 1996.

Geography:

Size of Tennessee

Borders with: Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, México

Climate: hot, humid near coasts; cooler in mountains; tropical rain forest at Petén

Highest peak: Volcán Tajomulco (4,200 m.)

Natural resources: petroleum, wood, fish, coffee, sugar, bananas

Natural hazards: earthquakes and hurricanes

Literature:

Popol Vuh (sacred book of the Mayas)

Anales de los Kakchiqueles (Kakchiquel book)

Chilam Balam (Mayan book)

Rigoberta Menchú

Miguel Angel Asturias *El señor presidente* (novel); *Hombres de maíz* (early novel in style of realismo mágico, 1949)

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