

# Guatemala

## Geography

Location: Middle America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Honduras and Belize and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between El Salvador and Mexico

Area:

total area: 108,890 sq km

land area: 108,430 sq km

Land boundaries: total 1,687 km, Belize 266 km, El Salvador 203 km, Honduras 256 km, Mexico 962 km

Coastline: 400 km

Maritime claims:

continental shelf: 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

International disputes: border with Belize in dispute; talks to resolve the dispute are stalled

Climate: tropical; hot, humid in lowlands; cooler in highlands

Terrain: mostly mountains with narrow coastal plains and rolling limestone plateau (Petén)

Natural resources: petroleum, nickel, rare woods, fish, chicle

Land use:

arable land: 12%

permanent crops: 4%

meadows and pastures: 12%

forest and woodland: 40%

other: 32%

Irrigated land: 780 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: deforestation; soil erosion; water pollution

natural hazards: numerous volcanoes in mountains, with frequent violent earthquakes; Caribbean coast subject to hurricanes and other tropical storms

Note: no natural harbors on west coast

## People

Population: 10,998,602 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 43% (female 2,324,041; male 2,424,686)

15-64 years: 53% (female 2,939,170; male 2,934,334)

65 years and over: 4% (female 198,807; male 177,564) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.53% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 34.65 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 7.33 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: -2.04 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 52.2 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:  
total population: 64.85 years  
male: 62.27 years  
female: 67.56 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 4.63 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:  
noun: Guatemalan(s)  
adjective: Guatemalan

Ethnic divisions: Mestizo - mixed Amerindian-Spanish ancestry (in local Spanish called Ladino) 56%, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian 44%

Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant, traditional Mayan

Languages: Spanish 60%, Indian language 40% (23 Indian dialects, including Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi)

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1990 est.)  
total population: 55%  
male: 63%  
female: 47%

## Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Guatemala

conventional short form: Guatemala

local long form: Republica de Guatemala

local short form: Guatemala

Capital: Guatemala

Independence: 15 September 1821 (from Spain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 15 September (1821)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: three equal vertical bands of light blue (hoist side), white, and light blue with the coat of arms centered in the white band; the coat of arms includes a green and red quetzal (the national bird) and a scroll bearing the inscription LIBERTAD 15 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 1821 (the original date of independence from Spain) all superimposed on a pair of crossed rifles and a pair of crossed swords and framed by a wreath

## Economy

Industries: sugar, textiles and clothing, furniture, chemicals, petroleum, metals, rubber, tourism

Agriculture: accounts for 25% of GDP; most important sector of economy; contributes two-thirds of export earnings; principal crops - sugarcane, corn, bananas, coffee, beans, cardamom; livestock - cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens; food importer

Illicit drugs: transit country for cocaine shipments; illicit producer of opium poppy and cannabis for the international drug trade; the

government has an active eradication program for cannabis and opium poppy

## Transportation

Railroads:

total: 1,019 km

Highways:

total: 26,429 km

Inland waterways: 260 km navigable year round; additional 730 km navigable during high-water season

Pipelines: crude oil 275 km

Ports: Champerico, Puerto Barrios, Puerto Quetzal, San Jose, Santo Tomas de Castilla

Airports:

total: 528

Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Navy, Air Force