

Countries Of The World: Guatemala

By National Geographic Kids, adapted by Newsela staff on 06.11.18

Word Count **440**

Level **330L**



Image 1. Volcán de Agua, near Guatemala City, Guatemala. Photo: Hamid Khan / EyeEm via Getty Images.

Guatemala is a country in Central America. On one side is the Pacific Ocean. On the other is the Caribbean Sea.

Guatemala contains many different kinds of land. Some areas have tall mountains. Others have sandy beaches. Guatemala has volcanoes, too. It has 24. Four are active. They could still erupt.

Nature



Source: WorldAtlas

A special bird lives in the mountains of Guatemala. It is called the Resplendent Quetzal. The bird is very colorful. It has bright feathers. The male birds have long, beautiful tails.

Guatemala has many forests. Some are high up in the mountains. They are so high they reach the clouds. These are called cloud forests. Orchids grow here. So do ferns and mosses.

Many animals live in Guatemala. They include jaguars, monkeys and deer.

People And Culture

People have lived in Guatemala for a long time. One ancient group was called the Maya. They built a civilization here. The Maya knew a lot about math and science. They left writing behind, too. They used symbols for different words.

Did you know?

In Guatemala, people speak around 21 dialects of the Mayan language. A dialect is a version of a language.

Source: IntrepidTravel.com

Today, the Maya people still live in Guatemala. Maya women weave colorful cloth. They make the same clothes their ancestors wore.

Many people in Guatemala are natives. Most of the natives are Maya.

Government And Economy

In the 1870s, Guatemala started making a lot of money. Farmers were growing coffee. They sold it to other countries. Many other countries wanted to buy it. Guatemala began making a lot of money.

Rich landowners wanted to grow more coffee. To make room, they pushed the Maya off their land. This led to a civil war. On one side was the government. On the other side were the native groups.

The fighting lasted many years. More than 200,000 people died. In 1996, the president signed a peace deal. This brought the war to an end.

In 1986, Guatemala created a new government. The people vote to choose the president. Lawmakers in Congress pass new laws.

History



People have lived in Guatemala for a long time. Scientists think the first people lived here about 11,000 years ago. Later, people started building villages. Then the Maya took over. The Maya ruled until around the year 900. That was about 1,100 years ago.

In the 1500s, the Spanish invaded Guatemala. That was about 500 years ago. The Spanish wanted to rule the land. They fought the Maya. Soon they defeated the native people. The Maya were forced to work for the Spanish. The land became part of a colony called "New Spain."

In 1821, Guatemala broke away from Spain. It became its own country.

Quiz

- 1 What is the section "Nature" MAINLY about?
- (A) the Resplendent Quetzal bird that lives in Guatemala
 - (B) the different groups of people that live in Guatemala
 - (C) the animals and plants that live in Guatemala
 - (D) the cloud forests in Guatemala's mountains

- 2 Read the following paragraph from the section "History."

In the 1500s, the Spanish invaded Guatemala. That was about 500 years ago. The Spanish wanted to rule the land. They fought the Maya. Soon they defeated the native people. The Maya were forced to work for the Spanish. The land became part of a colony called "New Spain."

What is the focus of this paragraph?

- (A) how the Maya became powerful
 - (B) how Guatemala became free from Spain
 - (C) how the Spanish lost power in Guatemala
 - (D) how Guatemala became part of Spain
- 3 Look at Map 2 in the section "History."
- What does the map show?
- (A) It shows where Guatemala is in Central America.
 - (B) It shows Guatemala's national capital on a map.
 - (C) It shows how close Guatemala is to the United States.
 - (D) It shows important places in Guatemala.

4 Read the section "Nature."

Which question is answered by Map 1?

- (A) How many people live in Guatemala?
- (B) What languages are spoken in Guatemala?
- (C) What does the flag of Guatemala look like?
- (D) How many volcanoes are there in Guatemala?

Answer Key

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