

Things To Do Around Lake Atitlan (& Daytrips from the lake)

The area around Lake Atitlan boasts a wide array of activities for the visitor – from experiencing the local Mayan cultures to taking in the expansive panoramas from high above the lake in a tandem paragliding adventure!

Located approximately 93 miles northwest of Guatemala City (2.5 to 3 hours by car or 20 minutes by helicopter), Lake Atitlan was formed approximately 85,000 years ago by volcanic eruptions. With a surface area of 82 square miles and a maximum depth of over 1000 feet, Lake Atitlan is the deepest lake in Central America. Its location at 5,100 feet above sea level and proximity to the equator provides a year-round, spring-like climate; warm and sunny most mornings and cool and cloudy in the afternoon. The dry season typically runs from November through May. Even during the rainy season (June – October) it is usually sunny in the mornings.

The lake is surrounded by 12 indigenous Mayan villages, which were inhabited long before the Spanish arrived in the mid-16th Century. The first village that most visitors come to is called Panajachel, or 'Pana' for short. It is a mix of local Kaqchiquel Mayan, Ladinos, expatriate residents, tourists and travelers from around the world. Facing the lake from as seen from 'Pana' almost all of the villages around the lake are accessible by water taxi with the exceptions of Santa Catarina Palopo (10 min. by car), San Antonio Palopo (20 min. by car), San Jorge La Laguna (10 min. by car) and Santa Clara La Laguna (accessed via car from San Pablo).

Aside from the spectacular scenery and climate, one of the main attributes that makes a lasting impression on visitors is the friendliness and sincerity of the local people. Amazingly, even though Guatemala is approximately the same size as the U.S. state of Tennessee, it is home to no less than 22 distinctive linguistic groups (not dialects but completely different languages). Lake Atitlan alone, is home to two of these groups – the Kaqchiqueles and the Tzutuhiles. While most people from these indigenous communities speak Spanish as a second language, they proudly keep many of their traditions alive. One of the most apparent of these traditions, aside from the language, is the use of hand-woven textiles and outfits, which vary in design and material from village to village and which are still worn by most women and some of the men.

Although one can get a taste of the beauty of Lake Atitlan in a couple days, there is certainly enough to entertain visitors of all ages and interests for a week, or much more... I have been visiting and living in Guatemala off and on for the past 23 years. Here are some of my recommendations for things to do around the lake as well as day-trips which are feasible using the lake as a base to explore western Guatemala.

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2. Explore the Villages Around Lake Atitlan:

- 1) **Panajachel, also known as 'Pana'** (2.5 to 3-hour drive from Guatemala City, 2.5-hour drive from Antigua, 1.5-hour drive from Xela) Main touristic town on the lake where most visitors arrive by car from Guatemala City. Panajachel is also the departure point for regularly scheduled water-taxi service to many villages, including: Santa Cruz La Laguna, Jaibalito, Tzununa, San Marcos La Laguna, San Pablo La Laguna, San Juan La Laguna, San Pedro La Laguna and Santiago. Pana has an eclectic, bohemian feel. The main shopping street, **Calle Santander**, is lined with artisans selling a wide array of handmade textiles, artwork and handicrafts. The older part of town is located north of Calle Santander, near the Catholic Church (built in 1567) and Mercado (Market).
 - a. **Nature Reserve & Zip Lines** (20-minute walk from Calle Santander heading out of town towards Solola, or 10-minute ride in tuk-tuk)
http://www.atitlanreserva.com/Reserva_Natural_Atitlan/English.html Soar nearly 200 feet above the forest floor on eight separate 'zip lines' to gain a bird's-eye view of the lake! A 30-minute walk takes visitors across swinging bridges, past waterfalls, and through lush forest planted with coffee. It is very common to see cuatimundi and spider monkeys during the walk. For the less intrepid visitor, it is also possible to walk the trails and visit the butterfly preserve without doing the zip lines. \$23.50 entry fee for zip lines, trails and butterfly preserve, or \$5.50 excluding zip lines.
 - b. **Natural Hot Springs** (located at the Hotel Regis, half-way down Calle Santander) An oasis right in the middle of the bustle of Pana. Enjoy a soak in one of two natural hot spring pools on the property of the Hotel Regis set amidst colorful tropical gardens. Q100.00 includes towel and use of hot springs and the refreshingly cool waterfall.
 - c. **Yoga (Vinyasa Flow)** Small group classes in Pana Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 8:00a.m. – 9:15a.m. and Tuesday and Thursday from 5:00p.m. – 5:15p.m. Q.40.00 per class. Private instruction also available at La Casa Colibri upon request (please inquire for details).
 - d. **Massage** Treat yourself to an amazing therapeutic massage. Alicia is one of the best masseuses I have ever met. She definitely has found her calling and has an innate gift. There is a massage table at the house which Lucas, the houseman, can set up wherever you like. A 90-minute massage is Q.300.00 (approximately \$40.00).
 - e. **Restaurants & Coffee Shops**
 - i. **Crossroads Coffee Shop** (located just south of the Catholic church, at 0-27 Calle del Campanario) <http://www.crossroadscafepana.com> : owned and operated by Mike, an expatriate from the US, Crossroads café is a 'must' for serious coffee lovers. Mike travels throughout Guatemala in search of the best, gourmet coffees the country has to offer. He takes pride in explaining the qualities of each coffee as well as the roasting process (which he does himself, daily, in his industrial-sized, custom-made roaster).
 - ii. **La Parada Coffee Shop** (located at the entrance to an arcade-style building, across the street from the top of Calle Santander (the main shopping street). Romeo the owner and his Italian wife serve up a variety of coffees all grown locally around the lake. Their 'cortado' (espresso with a dot of milk foam) and the cappuccino are especially good.

- iii. **Sunset Café:** Located at the end of Calle Santander, in front of the lake. Sunset café is an idyllic spot to observe the many faces of the lake while enjoying a 'limonada con soda' (homemade carbonated limeade) or icy cold Gallo (Guatemala's national beer). If you are hungry, I recommend the Super Nachos or the Chicken Burritos, although all the food is quite good. Live music most evenings.
- iv. **Circus Bar & Restaurant** (located at the beginning of Avenida de los Arboles, north of Calle Santander) <http://www.circusbar.com.gt/>: This bohemian bar/restaurant has been a fixture on the Pana scene since 1988. Enjoy live music nightly from around 8:00pm. Try one of the pizzas made in their wood-burning pizza oven. In particular I recommend the 'Molier Pizza', which is a combination of thinly sliced potatoes, bacon, blue cheese and mozzarella cheese. I know...it may sound a little strange, but it is delicious!! The broccoli au gratin is also excellent.
- v. **El Sol Japanese Restaurant** (located on the road to Santa Catarina Palopo, on the opposite side of the Rio San Francisco in the Jucanya neighborhood. El Sol Japanese restaurant is about a 15-minute walk or a five-minute, Q10.00 ride in tuk-tuk). El Sol offers some of the best Japanese food I have sampled, outside of Japan. The owners are both Japanese and ran a restaurant in the Kansai area of Japan, prior to moving to Guatemala. The menu is in Spanish and has photos of each dish, which make it easier to order if you are not well-versed in Japanese cuisine. There is a small indoor dining room as well as nice outdoor seating under umbrellas in the garden. My favorites at El Sol are the Tempura Teishoku (or Tempura prefix menu which includes seasonal, fresh vegetables and shrimp fried in a light, tempura batter, miso soup, Japanese white rice, and a salad), Katsu Teishoku (pork cutlet served with the same accompaniments as above).
- vi. **Restaurant at Hotel Atitlan** (located on the outskirts of Pana, on a bay at the beginning of the road up to Solola. Hotel Atitlan is about a 20-minute walk from Pana or Q30.00 in tuk-tuk). I recommend sitting on the outdoor, set behind a cobalt-blue swimming pool and immaculate botanical gardens. The service is impeccable, as is the food. The 'Healthy Chicken Soup', tuna or chicken-salad stuffed avocado and BLT served on a homemade bun are some of my favorite recommendations for lunch.
- vii. **Guajimbos Uruguayan Grill** (located about half-way down Calle Santander): Guajimbos is a simple open-air restaurant which serves up delicious steaks and sausages, amongst other dishes. Live music most evenings.
- viii. **Deli Jasmin** (located at the end of Calle Santander on the right-hand side). Deli Jasmin is a little oasis set amongst fragrant jasmine and other flowering tropical plants. Enjoy a wide variety of wholesome, homemade dishes for breakfast or lunch. Deli Jasmin's breakfasts are especially good: banana pancakes, eggs benedict and the Desayuno American (served with eggs, hash browns and toast) are some of my absolute favorite. Their fruit smoothies (called 'liquados') are unforgettable too (the papaya with milk is my favorite).

- ix. **Chez Alex** (located towards the beginning of Calle Santander): high-end French-inspired restaurant serving a variety of well-prepared dishes. The owners draw on their German, French and Guatemalan backgrounds to create top-notch cuisine.
- f. **Shopping for local, handmade handicrafts** A wide variety of handmade textiles, leather goods, artwork and much, much more can be found along Calle Santander. Except in some stores, most prices are not set and bargaining is expected. After asking how much the item you are interested in costs (“cuanto cuesta?”) I recommend then asking, “Y lo menos?” which loosely translated means, ‘And what is the best price?’. A good tip is to then thank the vendor and walk away. If there is any room for a deeper discount, the vendor will let you know what her best price is as you walk away. Having said this, in many cases the vendors will assume that you have already shopped around and know what a given item should cost, in which case you will be given the best price from the start (you will discover whether or not this is the case as you walk away after having inquired about the price). It is also important to keep in mind that by in large, the majority of handicrafts for sale are not mass produced, they are made in many cases by the vendors who are selling them (or their family members). Many hours, days and in some cases, months are spent to create the item for which you are bargaining. The difference of bargaining the price down a few Quetzals (Guatemalan currency) can make a big difference in the life of the vendor and her family.
- g. **Used Textile Market (Tuesday & Friday during the morning only) at Fire Station in Pana:** A wide variety of used textiles for sale a bargain prices. Fire station is across the street from Banco Banrural and gas station on main street near entrance to Pana.
- h. **Dina’s Chocolates:** located across the street from Pana Super and Chero’s Pupusas, Diana’s chocolates has a wide selection of handmade chocolates, made with local cacao, cardamom, mint, orange rind, coffee and much more.
- i. **Central Market (Mercado Central):** similar to a farmer’s market, this market offers a wide, colorful array of produce, meats and fish from the lake. In addition, one can find many local household items still used by the indigenous population which would also be of interest to the visitor (and would make great gifts):
 - i. **Pottery:** there is a small shop just outside the northern entrance to the market. This shop is filled to the ceiling with rustic, terracotta pots of all sizes, candle holders and much more. Prices are marked on all items with nothing priced more than around Q.100.00 (\$12.00).
 - ii. **Candles:** there are three small candle shops inside and near the market. One is located inside the indoor market on the north end of the building. A second candle shop is located across the street from the northern end of the market (on the road leading to ‘Barrio Norte’) and the third candle shop in the vicinity is located on a small street located between the market and the Catholic church. All three shops (‘locales’) offer a nice selection of candles which come in all shapes and sizes. Most candles cost from a few Quetzals to no more than Q50.00 for the larger ones. These candle shops are also a great place to purchase round candles which can be used in the wooden trough candle holders which are sold throughout the country (formerly used as sugar moulds).

- iii. **Baskets and mats made from local reeds:** Visit a small shop ('local') located in the 'dry-goods' section in the center of the covered market. This small stall boasts a nice selection of baskets and mats.
 - iv. **Bags made of maguey twine:** these are incredibly durable, long-lasting bags made from a twine derived from the maguey plant. The maguey plant was grown in abundance in and around many of the villages on Lake Atitlan, especially San Juan La Laguna and San Pablo La Laguna. Bags made from maguey twine come in a variety of styles and sizes, from a net-like bag (handy for shopping) to a more tightly woven satchel-type bag. Although not made specifically for the tourist market, I think these bags make very useful and inexpensive souvenirs (around Q20.00 to Q50.00). There is one dry-goods shop on the inside of the southern side of the covered market, at the base of the entry ramp on the left-hand side that usually has a few different styles to choose from.
- 2) **Santa Catarina Palopo** (10-minute walk from La Casa Colibri, 10-minute drive from Pana: Q3.00 in public pick-up taxi or Q30.00 in private pick-up taxi or Tuk-Tuk) Santa Catarina Palopo is a charming Maya-Kachiquel Village known for their colorful teal, turquoise and green handmade costumes which are still worn by women (and some men) of the village situated on hillside around 16th Century church. The annual town festival is held on November 25th in honor of Santa Catalina de Alejandría, the patrón saint of Santa Catarina Palopo.
- a. **Take in the sights and sounds along the main road:** observe women weaving on back- looms in front of their homes and shops, shop for locally made textiles and artwork.
 - b. **Restaurant at Hotel Villa Santa Catarina** (on the road leading to the lake from the Catholic church) Wonderful service. Indoor/outdoor terrace seating with views across the pool to the tops of volcanoes in the distance. The fish soup and pepian (a typical stew-like dish made with ground pumpkin seeds, dried peppers, tomatoes and either chicken or beef) are two of my favorite dishes here. Via Santa Catarina's 'Michelada con Moza' is also excellent (kind of like a Bloody Mary made with a dark Guatemalan beer).
 - c. **Restaurant 6.8 Palopo** located at Casa Palopo (located next door to La Casa Colibri, approximately a 10-minute walk from the center of Santa Catarina) <http://www.casapalopo.com/6.8.html> Casa Palopo's lounge and restaurant are a 'must'. Perfect service and truly some of the best food to in all of Lake Atitlan. I recommend arriving in the late afternoon to enjoy the sunset from the lounge area. After the sun goes down the staff transform the atmosphere with seemingly hundreds of candles. All the food is spectacular, the Tuna Tartar and Bomba de Chocolate (chocolate soufflé) are addiction-forming indulgences! (note: reservations are recommended)
 - d. **Starting point for scenic hike to the lookout point at Aguas Escondidas:** Amazing vistas of the entire lake and surrounding volcanoes and mountains await you as you follow the trail diagonally up the mountainside to a lookout point over 1000 feet above the starting point. This unique journey begins as you wind your way up through the small alleyways of Santa Catarina Palopo. Emerging at the top of the village, you pass through terraced onion fields before coming to the beginning of the trail itself. The views begin as soon as you arrive at the onion fields... I recommend stopping

often, not only to catch your breath (you may notice the 5200-foot altitude at this point!) but also to taken in the scenery, warm sunshine and sounds of nature. From the onion fields, the path steadily proceeds to a lookout point near Aguas Escondidas from which point it is possible to secure transportation back to Panajachel (via pre-arranged private transportation or via regular, but sporadic public transportation). I recommend getting an early start, as this hike faces west, it is best to take advantage of morning shade and fresh air. The entire hike takes approximately two to three hours. (note: This hike can be quite strenuous, depending on your pace. Be sure to bring water.)

- 3) **San Antonio Palopo** (10-minute drive from Santa Catarina Palopo: Q3.00 in public pick-up taxi, 20-minute drive from Pana: 5.00 in public pick-up taxi or Q.40.00 in private pick-up taxi or Tuk-Tuk)
- a. **Observe traditional weaving:** There are several co-ops where you can observe the weaving process.
 - b. **Handmade Pottery:** San Antonio Palopo is known for their unique design. There are several shops (in the same vicinity as the weavers) that sell a wide variety of pottery, from mugs and plates to sculptures.
 - c. **Wander through the extensive terraced onion fields above the village:** After taking a look inside the mid-16th Century church, wind your way through the labyrinth of alleyways behind the church to the top of the village to marvel at the generations-old terraced onion fields and jaw-dropping views below of the village and lake.
 - d. **Good Friday Procession:** You'll feel as if you're in a National Geographic special as you observe all of the local population of this small village turn out for this centuries-old procession every year on Good Friday. Preparations begin a couple of days before the procession itself when locals begin laying down intricate carpets made of dyed saw dust and flower petals. The uninterrupted carpet continues for well over a kilometer, forming a giant loop which starts and ends at the 16th Century Catholic church. The procession is led by a devotee playing the role of Jesus carrying a cross and followed by long procession of other devotees, shouldering the weight of several large floats which house icons of various saints. The procession leaves the church around 11:00a.m. and slowly winds its way over the elaborate saw dust and flower petal carpets before returning to the church late that night. I observed several hours of this procession in 2009 and can vouch for its unadulterated authenticity. I was one of only three or four non-Guatemalans present and one of only a handful that was not indigenous. Photos & Video of 2009 Procession:
http://picasaweb.google.com/zecurioustraveler/SanAntonioPalopo_Guatemala_EasterWeekProcession_041009?authkey=Gv1sRgCKz6gZGw2LnBlwE
- 4) **Santa Cruz La Laguna** (15 minutes by public water taxi boat: Q.15.00, private boats can be hired for approximately Q.150.00 for up to six people) Water taxi boats depart about every half hour throughout the day from early morning until approximately 4:00p.m. from the Tzanjuyu dock (Embarcadero Tzanjuyu) located one street to the west of Calle Santander. In any of the villages on the eastern shore of Lake Atitlan, simply go to the dock and within a half hour or so, a water taxi will be going in the direction you would like to go (i.e., towards Pana or towards San Pedro La Laguna). Most water taxis will first stop at the picturesque bay of Paxanax (pronounced 'pash-ah-nash').

- a. **Hiking:** Either Paxanax or Santa Cruz La Laguna makes an excellent starting point for a hike along the lake to the adjacent villages of Jaibalito (40 minute hike), Tzununa (40 minute hike from Jaibalito), San Marcos La Laguna (40 minute hike from Tzununa) and finally to San Pablo La Laguna and San Pedro La Laguna.
 - b. **SCUBA diving:** ATI Divers has their dive shop located at La Iguana Perdida http://www.laiguanaperdida.com/ati_divers.php . They have offered PADI dive courses here since 1996.
- 5) **Jaibalito** (20 minutes by boat from Pana by way of Santa Cruz La Laguna. See directions for Santa Cruz La Laguna for detailed explanation). The village of Jaibalito itself is a very small hamlet with little to see. The main point of interest to the traveler here in my opinion is **Club Ven Aca** <http://clubvenaca.com/> . This sublime restaurant, accessible on foot or boat only, is set behind an infinity pool and jacuzzi with the lake and volcanoes as a backdrop. Carmen, the proprietor, serves up some of the best food on the lake, from the fish tacos made from mahi-mahi caught nearby in the Pacific Ocean, to the Jack Daniel's chicken sandwich, to the specials of the day. The Purple Basil Mojito, Ven Aca's signature drink is a must!
- 6) **Tzununa** A small, traditional Tzutuhil Mayan village. It is interesting to take a walk around and observe this very traditional village where buildings are still made of adobe mud brick. People here are very shy, though friendly.
- 7) **San Marcos La Laguna**
 - a. Yoga
 - b. Cliff Diving: for the more adventuresome, there is a great spot here for diving off of cliffs which range in height from approximately 10 feet to 30 feet above the surface of the lake. This area can either be reached from the center of San Marcos by foot or by private boat
- 8) **San Pablo La Laguna** Another very traditional village. Interesting for those who are interested in seeing how many of the villages once looked up until thirty or so years ago. Buildings still made from adobe, women in the courtyards of their homes weaving on back looms, corn, coffee and beans drying in the outdoor patios. This is the best place to take a public pick-up truck taxi (approximately Q.10.00 one-way) or hire a private one (approximately Q.60.00 one-way) to the town of Santa Clara La Laguna, located high above the lake basin.
- 9) **Santa Clara La Laguna** This village is situated over 1000 feet above Lake Atitlan. The drive from San Pablo La Laguna, alone, is worth making the trip. Pick-up taxis (either private or public) depart from the center of San Pablo. At first you travel through several kilometers of coffee plantation and forest before beginning the series of switchback turns that take you to the village of Santa Clara La Laguna. You will feel like you are flying, as you look out over the entire lake and surrounding highlands. You will notice that Santa Clara is a few degrees cooler than the villages around the lake, due to the higher elevation.
 - a. **Handmade Baskets:** This village is well known for their homemade baskets.
 - b. **Hiking to Scenic Overlook called 'Rostro de la Maya' (which means 'Face of the Maya' as it looks like the profile of a face as seen from the lake over 1000' feet below:** Santa Clara is also the starting point for the short hike up the 'Rostro de la Maya' (face of the Maya) from which one can see the entire lake and, on a clear day, almost all the way down to the Pacific Ocean, 7000 feet below and 40 nautical miles away. There is a great little eatery in Santa Clara. To get there, continue almost to the end of the main road that you enter the town on. You will pass under a pedestrian overpass and the

small eatery is located on the right-hand side, just before the end of the road. As you enter, women will be patting away fresh tortillas over an open fire. A lunch of home-cooked chicken and tortillas will set you back Q.15.00. The restaurant is clean and has a nice outdoor patio seating area in the back.

- 10) **San Juan La Laguna** Traditional Tzutuhil village. This village is full of local artists & small galleries. Traditional organic dyeing techniques have been revived by several local women's coops where a variety of items made from local textiles can be purchased. From the boat dock, continue straight along the main road up the hill. As you make your way up the hill, you will pass several small artist studios and textile shops. Upon reaching the top of the hill, make a right at the two-story yellow marketplace building. Continue straight to the first corner and make a left. Continue along the road until you arrive at two more textile coops on opposite corners at the next 'main' intersection. Continue straight along this road until you arrive at Banco Banrural, make a left here. Along the entire route you will pass several artisan shops. After turning left at the bank, you will come to a local leather shop where the owner makes a wide variety of custom-made bags, shoes and much more.
 - 11) **Santiago Atitlan** Largest town on the lake. Very traditional Tzutuhil village. Home to Pre-Colombian Mayan deity called Maximon <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxim%C3%B3n>.
 - 12) **San Pedro La Laguna** Also a Tzutuhil village. San Pedro has gained a reputation as somewhat of a gathering point for the young backpacker crowd. It is full of inexpensive hostels as well as many good and inexpensive restaurants.
 - a. **Hiking:** This is the starting point for hikes to the summit of San Pedro Volcano. For those interested in hiking San Pedro Volcano, I recommend getting as early of a start as possible, as it is often cloudy or rainy in the afternoons, depending on the time of year. After arriving at the dock, you can hire a local guide employed by the town office for approximately \$5.00 to guide you to the summit. Note that this is quite a strenuous hike which takes four hours to ascend and about three hours to descend. While the hike goes through scenic forest and farmland, there are not too many views (due to the vegetation) until you reach the summit. For a less strenuous hike and equally impressive views, I recommend the hike to the 'Face of the Maya' (see Santa Clara La Laguna).
 - b. **Restaurants:** Two of my favorite places to eat here are Zulu's Secret Garden (for authentic Israeli fare) and La Puerta (for healthy, Guatemalan-fusion cuisine).
3. **Mountain Biking** Mountain bikes can be hired in Panajachel from Hotel Utz Jay (located at 5 Calle 2-50 Zona 2, off of Calle Santander). Rental prices are Q.40/hour or Q.175/day (including helmets)
- a. **Scenic countryside hamlet of Caliaj and surrounding mountains (*Ask me for directions*)**
Caliaj is a small hamlet located about 40 minutes from Panajachel by pick-up (you can hire a pick-up truck to take you and your bikes to Caliaj for approximately Q.100). You will undoubtedly feel like you've stepped back in time to the pre-Columbian era, as travel into a steep ravine on a well-graded dirt road and up the other side to arrive at this small hamlet, surrounded on three sides by deep ravines. Foreigners are definitely a rare sight here, as you will notice from all the attention (curiosity) that your presence attracts, especially from the throngs of small children. Caliaj is characterized by many small, family farms; each with their own milk cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys and crops. Most houses have their own 'temascals' (traditional Mayan saunas) which is the way indigenous people in

to see a huge array of birds, not to mention unspoiled wilderness, is at **Los Tarrales Reserve** (located on the Pacific slope of Toliman Volcano) <http://www.tarrales.com> . The reserve covers an immense area ranging from 2460 to 11,483 feet above sea level. To date, more than 330 bird species have been recorded in the reserve, including the Horned Guan, King Vulture and a wide variety of tropical bird species such as Toucans, Parakeets, etc. A day trip to the reserve can be organized in a private shuttle at a cost of approximately \$100.00 for the roundtrip transportation (approximately one hour fifteen minutes), plus the cost to hire a very knowledgeable bird guide. It is important to get an early start to see the greatest number of birds. I recommend leaving the house no later than 7:00a.m.

9. **Weaving Lessons** A local master weaver from the village of Santa Catarina Palopo can come to the house and provide as many hours of instruction as the guest desires. (\$5.00 per hour)
10. **Guatemalan Cooking Class** Angela, a local chef from the Quiche ethnic group with 25+ years of experience, will provide hands-on instruction as you make a full meal, including dessert. An interpreter is available upon request. Angela is an expert at a wide variety of traditional Guatemalan dishes as well as northern Italian cuisine (having worked for a northern Italian family for many years). (\$15.00 per person: includes ingredients, instruction and recipes) Ask me for details.
11. **Lake Tours by Private Boat** Custom lake excursions in a new, private 20-passenger boat (with both shaded seating area and outdoor area) can be tailored to your interests. Prices vary depending on length of tour and number of passengers. For example: An all-day trip, departing after breakfast, for six people starting in Santa Catarina Palopo, sailing along the shore in front of San Antonio Palopo and Atitlan Volcano with stops at the villages of Santiago Atitlan, San Juan La Laguna, cliff jumping at San Marcos La Laguna, stopping for lunch at Club Ven Aca in Jaibalito and returning to Santa Catarina Palopo by around 4:00p.m. costs approximately \$150.00. Please ask me for more information and reservations.
12. **Spear-Fishing With Local Kaqchiquel Guide** Most of the black bass which are fished out of Lake Atitlan are caught by local Mayan fisherman using a spear gun. You can join a local fisherman who will show you how it's done. (\$25.00 Includes all equipment)
13. **Kaqchiquel-Mayan Archaeological Ruins of Iximche** <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iximche> One of the last Mayan ruins to be inhabited, Iximche is located approximately one and a half hours from Lake Atitlan. Private transportation can be arranged which can take up to 12 passengers for \$125.00 round trip. The entrance fee to the ruins is Q.50.00 (approximately \$6.60). Please ask me for details.
14. **Bi-Weekly Market at Chichicastenango** (approximately one hour by car from Pana). This colorful market is held every Thursday and Sunday and attracts both locals from the surrounding countryside and visitors from near and far. Although the twice-weekly market has become quite touristy in recent years, it is still well worth visiting to witness the surreal combination of colors, incense, cultures and goods for sale. Private transportation can take up to 12 passengers to Chichicastenango for \$100.00 round trip.
 - a. **Fernando y Ariz Chan's Textile Shop** (7a. Calle 5-12, Zona 1): located one block North of the Catholic church on the corner, next-door to the municipal building. Fernando and his wife Ariz have many one-of-a-kind examples of the finest textiles that can be found in Guatemala. They are happy to tell you about the various pieces (origin, weaving techniques, etc.) to you even if you are not interested to make any purchases. If you are interested in owning one of the country's finest hand woven textiles, then this shop is an

excellent source. Prices range from around Q200.00 (\$25.00) for some of the smaller pieces to over Q4000.00 (\$500.00) for some of the larger, antique pieces made of silk.

- b. **Mayan Inn** for lunch or drink in 1930s lounge. Entering this hotel, built in 1932 and decorated with antiques from all over Guatemalan is like stepping back in time. Upon entering the courtyard, you will be greeted by the cheerful music of the marimba as a man, dressed in traditional costume, plays age-old tunes. To the right is a cozy bar/lounge with a fireplace and picturesque views onto the courtyard, where a man dressed in traditional costume playing the marimba (Guatemala's national instrument) entices visitors to while away the afternoon while enjoying a cup of coffee or cold beer.. The Mayan Inn is also a wonderful choice for lunch: they have a prefix menu for around Q100.00 per person.
 - c. **Pascual Abaj:** This pre-Columbian hilltop site is sacred to the Quiche Maya. Located about a 20-minute walk from the Santo Tomas church, the ancient carved stone shrine located at the top of a pine-covered hilltop is still used by Mayan priests whom regularly perform ceremonies there.
 - d. **Santo Tomas Catholic Church** (built in 1540). Overlooking the outdoor market, this large church attracts many local Quiche Maya where they practice a combination of Christian and pre-Columbian religious traditions. Within this same church, the manuscript of the Popol Vuh, Guatemala's greatest literary work, was discovered by Father Francisco Ximénez when he served in Chichicastenango from 1701-1703. The manuscript, which was written by an anonymous Mayan author shortly after the Spanish conquest, contains the legends and history of the Quiché-Maya people.
 - e. **Market** The marketplace itself is located on the main square in Chichicastenango and is a kaleidoscope of color and activity, full of a huge variety of handmade textiles, artwork and handicrafts.
15. **Bi-Weekly Market at Solola** (20-minute drive from Pana) Authentic and colorful market held every Tuesday and Friday. (note: I highly recommend visiting this market, however do be sure to beware of pick pocketers!)
16. **Horseback Riding** <http://funatlakeatitlan.com/> Jim & Nancy, local expats from the US offer guided tours on horseback from Santiago Atitlan to the top of the ridge behind the bay of Santiago from where, on a clear morning, you can see down to the Pacific Ocean on one side and Lake Atitlan and its volcanoes on the other side. Rides vary in price from \$55.00 to \$60.00 per person and include a guide and full, gourmet meal served upon completion of the ride. Jim and Nancy also offer guided hikes into the surrounding cloud forest. Both hikes and horseback rides start at between 7:00a.m. and 9:00a.m. so it is necessary to take an early water taxi from Pana. Note: private boats can also be chartered from Santa Catarina Palopo to Santiago for approximately \$75.00 (round trip) for up to 12 people.
17. **Learn Spanish or Kaqchiquel** ask me for details on language schools and/or instructors. One on one instruction available at La Casa Colibri or in Panajachel
18. **Daytrip to Xocomil Waterslide Park**
http://www.irtra.org.gt/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=7&Itemid=126 Located two and half hours from Lake Atitlan, Xocomil water park is located in the tropical lowlands on the Pacific coast. This water park is truly a nice surprise! It is full big, well-designed waterslides, lazy rivers and wave pools, all set in a well-manicured, tropical lush setting. The park is clean and very well maintained and managed. Open Thurs – Sun from 9:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. Entrance fee is Q.100.00 (approximately \$13) and include access to all rides and attractions!

Leaving La Casa Colibri at 7:00a.m. you will arrive around 9:00a.m. which provides plenty of time to enjoy all the attractions and you will be back at the house by sunset. Private transportation for up to 12 passengers is \$150.00 round trip.

19. **Daytrip to La Antigua** Former seat of the Spanish colonial crown in what is now Guatemala, Antigua was at one time the capital of what is now Chiapas, Mexico to Panama. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Antigua is a perfect example of a 16th Century Spanish colonial town. Dramatically set at the base of a perfectly cone-shaped (extinct) volcano, Antigua is home to countless restaurants, cafes, shops, churches and marketplaces. Ask me for more information on daytrips to Antigua.
20. **Daytrip to Xela (Quetzaltenango)** Xela is located a one and a half hour drive to the north of Lake Atitlan. Guatemala's second largest city (behind the capital) has a distinctly German or Austrian feel to its architecture, due to the fact that it was developed largely by Germans in the 19th Century. It was the German immigrant population who introduced the coffee trade to Guatemala. While there is not a great deal of tourist sites per se, it is definitely worth spending a day exploring the city. Private transportation for up to 12 passengers is \$100.00 round trip.
21. **Visit to Scenic Countryside Town of Concepcion:** This is a small, off-the-beaten-track Kaqchiquel hamlet in the highlands near municipal capital of Solola. A wonderful place to take a stroll through the streets and pathways to get a taste of authentic, traditional village life. Located at 6,700 feet above sea level, this small village is located at the end of a nicely paved road which passes through breathtaking, vertigo-inducing scenery. The village of Concepcion is situated in a small plateau perched high above the town of Panajachel and surrounded by lush mountains and vegetable fields which supply many of the area markets. Of particular interest is the perfectly preserved 389 year old Catholic church (built in 1621). Nearly four-century old, hand-painted murals and timber framed beams still adorn the interior of the church. I recommend going early in the morning to observe the farmers working in their fields, dressed in the brightly-colored outfits typical to the Solola area. (Please note: be sure to ask permission before taking photos of the local people)