

# Guatemala independence day

## Working to intensify friendly bilateral relations

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AMBASSADOR OF GUATEMALA

Sept. 15 is a historic day for the Republic of Guatemala because on this day in 1821, the country started its journey as an independent republic.

With almost 200 years of independent life, Guatemala is a country with 23 ethnic groups, of which 22 are of Mayan and one of Garifuna (descendants of Carib, Arawak and West African



people) origin, who live in an area of 108,000 sq. km, its beautiful scenery bordered by Mexico, Belize Honduras and El Salvador.

Guatemala has been called the land of eternal spring for its climate, which is very cool all year, and not just for its geographical position, but also for

its wonderful rivers, lakes and 33 volcanoes. Furthermore, it is also bordered by the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

Guatemala has been a country blessed by nature and in its womb the Maya civilization was built, so the 65 percent of its population is the indigenous, ancestral legacy of that civilization.

Currently, in the north in the department of Petén, scientists are working with experts from

around the world to preserve El Mirador, which in terms of volume is the world's largest pyramid.

The Maya civilization was located on very fertile lands that produce high-quality coffee consumed around the world, gum, sesame seeds, rum, ornamental plants — products we have been exporting to Japan for several years.

As ambassador, I represent nearly 15 million Guatemalans

and my arrival in this friendly nation in May 2008, presenting my credentials to His Majesty Emperor Akihito, reaffirmed the ties of friendship and cooperation we have been keeping for 80 years.

The President of Guatemala H.E. Otto Pérez Molina wants to strengthen the bonds of friendship as well as trade and cooperation between Guatemala and Japan. As evidence of that interest, in May 2012, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala H.E. Harold Caballeros paid an official visit to Japan.

In Japan, there are approxi-

mately 400 Guatemalans, who have been welcomed by the Japanese people to integrate into Japanese society. Thus we cast our bonds of friendship and cooperation through blood ties.

In Guatemala, Japanese people have been living for many years, with the aim of increas-

ing trade and cultural relations among our peoples, which has resulted in the increase of trade and cultural exchanges.

During my tenure as ambassador I have had the opportunity to observe the enormous interest of the Japanese people to intensify our bilateral relations. I have

had the opportunity of exchanging views with academics, politicians, businessmen, students and journalists to build bridges that allow us to deepen the relation between the countries.

Long life to Guatemala! And long life to the people and government of Japan!



**Ancient: Deep in the tropical rain forest on the Pasión River, Seibal is one of the important archaeological sites of the Maya civilization.** GUATEMALA TOURISM BOARD

## Not the end of the world as we or the Maya know it

Dec. 21, 2012, according to the Maya calendar, is the end of the Oxlajuj B'aq'tun, or 13 Bak'tun, and the start of a new era that should be seen as an opportunity for positive renewal to generate changes in society and human nature in general. This is the Maya philosophy and is based on the knowledge and interpretation of the legacy left by the ancient Maya in their calendars.

Measuring time has always been central in Maya cosmology. The Long Count was one of the calendars used by the ancient Maya. This time measuring system consists of counting the days from an initial date or "year zero,"

measured according to five periods based on a vigesimal system. The greatest period, the Bak'tun, consists of 144,000 days.

Much has been said about the end of this cycle, often with an apocalyptic connotation. However, for the ancient Maya, this date didn't represent the end of the Long Count or the world.

*This article is an edited excerpt from the official website of the Guatemala Tourism Board. For more information, visit [www.visitguatemala.com](http://www.visitguatemala.com).*

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**to the People of the Republic of Guatemala**  
**on the 191st Anniversary of Their Independence**  
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