Guatemala is a place that I call home. My family, which is Korean, lives in Guatemala. Although to many people it might sound peculiar, to me, it is a privilege. Through the combination of cultures, I was able to experience diversity while growing up.

“Guatemala” means “land of many trees”; it is believed that the word “Guatemala” was derived from the Nahuatl word “Quauhtlemallan.” Originally, it started as the local Mayan word “quiche” which means land of many trees or forests. With the onset of the Spanish Conquest, the name was later translated by the Tlaxcaltecan soldiers, who travelled with Pedro de Alvarado, to “Quauhtlemallan”. As the Spanish started pronouncing and using the word “Quauhtlemallan,” the word developed into “Guatemala.” When I think of the phrase “land of many trees,” nature and beautiful landscapes come to mind. And true to its meaning, Guatemala is precisely that, which is one of the reasons why I love Guatemala.

Lake Atitlan

Lake Atitlan is one of the most beautiful lakes in the world and has become one of Guatemala’s most visited tourist destinations. “Atitlan” is a Mayan word that means “the place where the rainbow gets its colors.” Around the lake, there are small Mayan villages where people can get an insight of the Mayan culture while appreciating nature.

When my family and I go to Lake Atitlan, we usually rent a boat and get lunch. I love going to Lake Atitlan because it is the closest thing you can get to true beauty. I enjoy spending time with my family while seeing the volcanoes around the crystal clear lake. The lake is so clear that the mountains and the sky are reflected in the water; it is truly the place where the rainbow gets its colors.
Volcanoes in Guatemala

One of the enjoyable and rewarding things you can do in Guatemala is to hike a volcano. Climbing a volcano gives you the satisfaction of achievement while you benefit from being able to admire the nature that surrounds it. There are many volcanoes in Guatemala you can climb; personally, I have climbed Volcan de Pacaya (Pacaya Volcano) many times, even though it is an active volcano. There is a section where you can stop to have a picnic lunch with your family and friends before you finish climbing the volcano. Sometimes at the top, you can even see the crater and lava inside.

Fuentes Georginas

Fuentes Georginas is a natural steam bath located in the midst of a tropical jungle. The sulfurous mineral-rich water is heated directly from a volcano and some people say it has reputedly curative powers. Other people call this place a natural paradise because of its beauty and hot sulfur baths.
Guatemala is not only known for its beauty, but also for its culture.

**Tikal**

Tikal is the largest excavated site of the Mayan cities and is located in a rainforest in Petén, Guatemala. In Tikal you can enjoy seeing the beautiful Mayan ruins and experience the Mayan culture. You can go to the Popol Vuh Museum nearby or ask for a tour guide, who can explain the significance of the Mayan ruins and the representation and usage of the Mayan artifacts. From time to time, Tikal has special occasions when they demonstrate the Mayan ball game in the field that Mayans used to use. Tikal is rich in Mayan culture and history as well as in architecture.

**Mayan Caves**

Two of the main locations of the Mayan caves are in Petén and Alta Verapaz. Caves may be the most sacred places in ancient Maya landscape. They represent the entrance to Xibalbá, or the underworld. These caves are not only beautiful but also contain sculpted cave art, which resembles graffiti, rock carving (petro glyphs), and three-dimensional sculptures.
Antigua Guatemala

Antigua Guatemala is the former capital city of Guatemala. It is known for being one of the oldest and best-preserved Latin American cities with its church, ruins, and new baroque-style Spanish architecture.

Many people go to Antigua for different reasons. You can visit museums, go to the library, go to famous restaurants, walk around the park, or even go to the markets. If you go to Antigua during special holidays like Christmas and Easter, you can witness the Guatemalan festivals and have a glimpse of Guatemalan culture.
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