



The International Society of Guatemala Collectors web site. The ISGC is a non-profit organization and APS affiliate founded in 1948; membership in the Society is open to anyone interested in stamps and postal history of colonial and modern Guatemala and adjacent regions of Central America.

GuatemalaStamps.com

Why Collect Guatemala?

The tourist slogan “Guatemala, Land of Eternal Spring” is well known to all collectors of Guatemala, because it was used, in four languages, on the cancelling machines used during almost 40 years, beginning in 1935. Guatemala is an interesting and challenging country for the philatelist.

For the collector with a limited budget, it is **ideal**, because the number of stamps issued since 1871 is on the low side, when compared with other countries of the American continent, and, with very few exceptions, the price of all the major issues is at generally substantially lower levels than other countries of that area or U.S.A., let alone Europe.

Guatemala’s postal administration does not issue postage stamps primarily for collectors, but for its postal needs, and keeps to subjects directly related to the country’s history, prominent citizens, landmarks and tourist attractions. In the 19th C., it was one of the countries that declined the Seebeck offers of free issues renewed every year, under the condition that remainders of the previous one be returned and disposed of as he saw fit, including reprints to supply the stamp trade. Only major world events such as the Olympic games, U.P.U. anniversaries, and a few United Nations “Year/Day of..” are illustrated on Guatemalan stamps in a reasonable measure. You will not find endless sets with skiing champions, French impressionist painters, or other topics that have no relation to the country.

Many of the country’s regular issues, produced in large quantities, are **inexpensive**, and, having been printed over long periods, lend themselves to specialized collections and research to record colour variations, paper and perforation varieties, and other details. The handsome and inexpensive 1902 Waterlow issue is a fine example of the line-engravers art, with guidelines, position marks, plate flaws and re-entries – and many values surcharged – where research and study remain possible even a full century later.

Collecting Guatemalan stamps or even more so postal history can also be a challenge, as **early covers are not plentiful**, and a collection of blocks of four impossible to complete. However, they are at least ten times cheaper than U.S. or European items known in similar quantities. With recurring financial problems, in the past Guatemala often resorted to overprinting and surcharging available stamps stocks of less needed denominations to tide over stamp shortages. These provisional issues unfortunately received some attention from forgers, especially when the face value of the stamps was thereby increased. Substantial stocks of the early issues were remaindered and sold to the trade, and were in part canceled to order or show forged markings. The **challenge for the collector is thus also to distinguish the genuine from the forged or bogus**

items – or, why not, to form a reference collection of these spurious items and the outright forgeries of the first few issues.

Another challenging aspect of Guatemala philately is **postmarks**. Besides the widely distributed common types, there are many less common markings. The best example is probably the small numeral cancellers distributed late in 1888, for which only about 35 numerals out of the 153 recorded have so far been identified as to their place of use. For the past 25 years, the challenge is to find clear strikes of even the commonest date stamps used in outlying post offices!

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All memberships include a subscription to *El Quetzal (EQ)*, published four times a year. Members also have access to the member side of the ISGC website, where you may participate in the online Forum discussions, have access to back issues of *EQ*, and can download out-of-print ISGC publications.

Yearly dues are \$20.00 for North American Members in the USA, Canada, Mexico, and Guatemala, and \$25.00 for International Members in all other countries. An On-line Only membership (\$10.00, regardless of county) is also available. Members who sign up for the On-line Only membership will not receive a hard paper copy of *EQ* by regular mail.

I am grateful for the assistance of Nick Salter with this introduction to Guatemala and for his bringing the **International Society of Guatemala Collectors (ISGC)** to my notice. Nick publishes a highly informative website and blog ClassicLatinAmerica.com, providing; news, commentary and opinion on Central and South American philately