



# WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW? GUATEMALA TRAVEL INFO



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# WHERE IN THE WORLD AM I GOING?



Guatemala is a country of volcanoes, mountains, and beaches on the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea situated in Central America. Three of Guatemala's 30 volcanoes are still active. The country is bordered by Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and Belize.

The population of Guatemala today is more than 18 million people and is the second-most populated

country in both South and Central America. The Guatemalan currency is the Quetzal. Approximately half of the Guatemalans living today are descendants of the ancient Mayans. The primary causes of poverty in Guatemala are its economic, social and land inequality rates, which are among the highest in the world. More than 75 percent of their indigenous population lives in extreme poverty.

# WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

We endeavour to help make this a journey that will be life changing and a blessing to all.



The following information and guidelines are given to you for your safety and protection and any restrictions or limitations that are imposed as part of your travel are done to assure that you have a full ministry experience.

If travelling as a team, the team leader is responsible for the team and will act as the liaison between the local organizers and missionaries and the team. Even if you are not in agreement with a decision that was made by your team leader, his/her decision/s needs to be respected. Team members should always direct any questions or concerns directly to their team leader and not to the local staff or host missionaries.

## ARE THERE REQUIRED VACCINATIONS?

There are no required vaccines to travel to Guatemala, but the following are recommended:

- an up-to-date tetanus (within 10 years)
- Hepatitis A & B
- More info: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guatemala>
- CDC is also recommending that everyone 16 years of age and older be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 before travel.

## TRAVEL & BAGGAGE INFO:

- Liquids in your carryon must be travel size (no larger than 100 ml) and all containers must be carried in one separate clear plastic, zip-top bag.
- No sharp objects are allowed in carryon.
- No food will be served on your flight so take food or snacks.
- Do not place any valuables or cash in your checked baggage.

## WHAT MONEY SHOULD I TAKE WITH ME?

- Guatemala money is called quetzal. (1 Canada dollar = 6.40 Q/1 US dollar =7.73 Q)
- Credit cards can be used in some places. Debit cards can be used also at some bank machines to obtain Guatemalan currency. Be sure to notify your bank that you will be using your card during your time in Guatemala. Suggest taking a photo of the front and back of your cards you are taking and keep in a separate place.
- US dollars can be used but change will be given in local currency. US bills should be new, crisp bills with no tears or marks.

## ENTRY INTO GUATEMALA:

- Particular COVID restrictions and regulations may apply. These regulations will be verified closer to departure date.
- A visa is not required to enter Guatemala if you are a US or Canadian citizen.
- Passport must be valid for at least six months from date of arrival.
- When arriving in Guatemala, you will be required to complete an Entry and Custom form. This form will be handed out on the plane.
- When completing this form and entering through any immigration area you are entering as a **VISITOR/TOURIST** (be sure to carry address of where you are staying – noted at end of this document or sent by your team leader at a later date).

- Officials will ask for your passport and the form. After clearing passport control, collect your luggage.
- **Keep your baggage claim tickets available**, as you may be required to show it on leaving the baggage claim area. These tags are given to you at time of check in at the departure airport and may be on the back of your boarding pass.
- At the final custom check out you may be required to have your bags x-rayed or opened for a visual inspection.
- Be prepared as sometimes at the exiting of the airport it can be quite crowded and overwhelming with aggressive and persistent “helpers” wanting to help with your luggage. Don’t allow them to grab your luggage from you.

## STAYING IN GROUPS:

- **It is important that you always stay in groups of 2 or more at all times.** No one is to leave the group without the team leader or someone in the group knowing -- **always make sure someone knows!**
- No one is to leave the property or hotels/s at any time without permission.

## YOUR ACTIONS SPEAK!

As a guest in another country, it is important to behave in a way in which does not cause offence to our hosts or the nationals. ***It is very important that you observe and respect their work and the local traditions & culture.*** Always show respect to the people, staff and even your team members.

## ACTIONS SPEAK!

- Your actions speak loudly – so be polite and courteous.
- Avoid inappropriate actions between the opposite sex.
- Being flexible is essential to survive a different culture. Many things may seem wrong to you, but they are just different, and things might not always happen as fast or when you want them to happen. **One huge difference is time vs. relationships.** North Americans value time and are driven by time. Most cultures of the world are driven by relationships. Be open to learning what is important in other cultures and why it is important. *Just always keep in mind---be flexible -- your day might not always go as YOU planned!*
- No matter what task you will be undertaking, **a servant’s attitude** is the most important asset you can have. It will also help you to be flexible as you face cultural challenges and language barriers.

- There will be **NO** dating or exclusive friendships of the opposite sex during your trip. Avoid inappropriate actions between the opposite sex both on your team and with the nationals. Team members of the opposite sex should never spend any one-on-one time with each other or with any of the nationals.
- Consumption of alcohol, illicit drugs of any description and smoking will not be allowed.
- You may desire to help certain individuals, **but your partiality could create problems.** If you want to leave a gift for someone or if you brought things to give away, check with the team leader before giving anything.
- Avoid attitudes of cultural superiority and the temptation to look down on people who may be less educated or economically less fortunate than yourself.



## OTHER THINGS TO KNOW

### SCENT FREE:

- Please be scent free due to allergy issues of some people. (avoid perfumes, lotions, colognes, etc)

### WHAT TIME ZONE WILL WE BE IN?

- Guatemala is in Central Standard Time and does not change clocks.

### WHAT LANGUAGE DO THEY SPEAK?

- Spanish is the native language of Guatemala. Your hosts will be your translators, or they will arrange to have translators.
- When speaking to a translator you should speak clearly, slowly and only a sentence or two at a time. Telling jokes, puns, etc. do not translate well so avoid those.

### WILL WE HAVE ELECTRICITY?

- Electricity is the same as in the US and Canada, so adapters are not required.

### IS INTERNET AVAILABLE?

- WI-FI is available at the hotel and also at the school.

## WHERE WILL WE BE STAYING?

- You will be staying at a hotel in the city of Antigua close to the town square. Antigua is approximately 45 minutes from Guatemala City airport.
- It will be shared accommodation (2 people), but each room has private bathroom facilities, and each person will have their own bed.
- There will be hot water showers.

## WHERE WILL WE BE EATING?

- Noon meals will be supplied by the school during the week and other meals will be eaten either at the hotel, or at restaurants.
- No food should be eaten from street vendors.

## IS THE WATER SAFE TO DRINK?

- Bottled water will be supplied at the school. (take your own personal water bottle if you wish...mark your name on it). Purified water is provided at our accommodation. Non-bottled water, drinks or ice cubes should not be consumed when you are off the property (unless approved by staff or in restaurants)

## DO I NEED TO TAKE MY OWN BEDDING AND TOWELS?

- All bedding, pillows and towels are supplied.
- Facecloths aren't supplied at hotel so if you are used to using one be sure to take your own.
- Electricity is expensive in these countries so be considerate of this and do not waste electricity by leaving lights on when you aren't in your room.
- Because the building is concrete, please keep in mind that noise travels. If you are talking loud, laughing and making a lot of noise in your room that sound travels throughout and can be disturbing to other people.

## TOILETS:

- It is always wise to carry your own toilet paper or tissue as some public toilet areas may not have toilet paper.
- Toilet paper, sanitary products, etc are **not** to be put into the toilet. These items must be put in the wastebasket by the toilet. This applies both at the school and hotel bathroom facilities.

## CAN I TOUCH THE DOGS AND OTHER ANIMALS?

- Avoid touching or handling any animals. Dogs in these countries are more for security than pets and can be mean. Animals are usually quite dirty and flea-bitten also.

## WHAT IS THE WEATHER LIKE AND WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

- Weather is spring like temperatures. Mornings will start cool and usually warms up quickly. It works best to dress in layers. Temperatures will be warmer in Antigua than at the school in the mountains.
- A light jacket and/or sweatshirt is recommended as the evenings may be cool and temperatures can change quickly. We will be working in the mountain area so temperatures can be cooler especially in the mornings.
- Running shoes or closed toed shoes must be worn on building sites.
- Comfortable shoes or sandals are a necessity as streets are cobblestone and very uneven.
- Avoid wearing any valuable jewelry.
- Women should dress respectably and modest - no low-cut or loose neckline tops, spaghetti straps, bare midriffs, short shorts or skirts, or see-through clothing. Skirts or shorts must be of modest length.
- Capris or pants are acceptable for ladies and shorts are acceptable for men. Shorts can be worn in Antigua by women.
- Bare feet are not recommended anywhere. Exposed feet can lead to insect bites, rashes from plants and other injuries. Flip-flops are suggested to be worn in the showers.
- We may be attending church and dress is casual - pants/shorts are acceptable for men and pants/capris for women.

## WHAT IF I'M NOT FEELING WELL?

- Speak to your team leader immediately if you are not feeling well. It is important that you speak up in order to get treatment quickly and to help prevent passing on a bug to others.
- Be sure to keep your hands washed at all times to prevent germs being spread.
- Scratches, rash or even the slightest cut should receive immediate attention because of foreign and unfamiliar bacteria.
- Don't eat any unwashed fruit.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and **do not go barefoot**, especially in areas where animals may have defecated. Also use flip-flops in shower areas.
- Drink plenty of liquid – stay hydrated!



## IS IT OKAY TO TAKE PICTURES?

- *Yes, but be sensitive—and ask permission before taking pictures.* Guatemalan people are very conservative in speech and dress, and some cultures do not like their picture taken, or you may offend by taking pictures of what nationals might consider sacred or their private space. So, there may be times you are refused.
- *Never* take photos of any police, military or government uniform personnel.

## WILL WE BE DOING ANY SIGHTSEEING?

- Some sightseeing will be planned according to free days.

## WILL I BE ASKED TO SHARE A DEVOTIONAL?

- It is common for the host to ask the team to share a short devotional/Scripture reading in any given setting without forewarning. Other times you may be asked to pray or express a heartfelt greeting of thank you. Please limit these to 2-3 minutes unless otherwise instructed. A translator will be used.

## HOW SHOULD I INTERACT WITH CHILDREN AND STAFF?

- Remember the staff have relationships with the people who live in the communities and after you leave, they must face any impact of your visit with the people within the community. As you come and help you are connecting to the contacts, resources and infrastructure developed by your hosts in these regions. Please respect these relationships that our workers have developed among the people and other ministry sites.
- Please do **not** share your contact information. All communications should be directed through the ministry head office.
- Always keep your interactions with the children appropriate at all times. Never be alone in a secluded area with them.
- Always check with your host and/or team leader before giving any gifts to others you may encounter. Asking first allows us to guide and explain what is acceptable and what isn't.
- If you are eating snacks, etc. do not do this in front of the children or people.
- Be sure to keep your hands washed. If using hand sanitizers or handi-wipes do this discreetly so as not to offend the people we are working with or kids we may be interacting with.



## CAN I MEET MY SPONSOR CHILD OR A FRIEND'S CHILD?



Arrangements can be made to meet any sponsor children.

If you are meeting these children for the first time, please remember you are a stranger to them. Be sure to treat the child and the family with dignity and respect. The child may be shy and hesitant to have their photo taken so respect that and not be demanding. Treat them as you would want your child to be treated.

### OTHER POLICIES:

- Arms of Jesus (AOJ) policy is that staff and team do not exchange email addresses. So do not put them in an awkward spot by asking for that information or even giving them your contact info.
- You will see needs and poverty and may feel drawn to help certain individuals, but your partiality could create problems. If you want to leave a gift for someone or if you brought things to give away, check with the team leader before giving anything.
- No cash is to be given to AOJ Guatemala directly for use in projects or other needs. All funds must be sent through AOJ Canada office so please speak with team leader if need be.
- You may have the opportunity to meet some children that are in need of sponsorship. If you are interested in sponsoring a particular child please speak directly to the team leader or social worker about this. **Do not indicate your desire to the family or the child.** All the necessary details will be done through the AOJ office.



AOJ High School built in 2015

## TIPS & SPENDING MONEY NEEDS:

Tips will be needed for the following areas:

- Allowance is in the budget for meals on “free” days and paid with team funds, but **tips aren’t allowed for and will need to be covered by team members.**
- We will be served a “thank you’ dinner at the school on our last day there. This meal is served by the children who are learning to cook, so we always like to bless them with a tip.
- Our driver/translator
- servers in restaurant at hotel we stay at in Antigua

## OTHER SPENDING MONEY NEEDS:

- for personal purchases (souvenirs, food and drinks at airports, etc)
- suggest \$150-200.00 for personal spending and tips
- Arms of Jesus has a “store” at the school which sells scarves, Bible bags, table runners, coffee, items made by students, etc.. Making purchases here support the school.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT:

- This information will be emailed to you before departure and is to be used for emergency use only.

## REGISTERING WITH EMBASSY PRIOR TO DEPARTURE:

Once you receive in-country address, etc. you will be required to register with the appropriate Embassy prior to your departure.

- **CANADIAN PASSPORT HOLDER:**
  - <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>
- **US PASSPORT HOLDER:**
  - <https://step.state.gov/STEP/Pages/Common/Citizenship.aspx>



**Let’s all be F-A-T!**

**F-lexible**

**A-daptable**

**T-eachable**

# SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

Be sure to pack at least 2-3 days of essentials (ie: toothbrush, toothpaste, underwear, pants/shorts, shirts, etc) in your carryon. Should your luggage be lost you will appreciate having these items.

**Do not take any valuables with you. If you don't want to lose it, leave it at home!**

**Don't pack valuables or cash in your checked luggage.**

## PACKING AS A TEAM:

- Distribute the supplies among all team members. Prioritize those items that are musts for your ministry activities and pack them first.
- Don't put all the same item into one bag—be sure to distribute through all the different pieces of luggage.
- Remove original packaging and price stickers so that the items do not “look new.”
- Use ziplock bags to hold loose items rather than leaving them in their boxes (pens, markers, erasers, etc). Be sure to double bag liquids.

## DID I PACK?

- my Bible and devotional
- photos of my family, winter/fall scenes, etc. (nationals love to see your “home”. Avoid showing photos of your house, vehicles, or anything that portrays “wealth”)
- a flashlight with extra batteries
- an alarm clock - battery operated (don't be dependent on your phone)
- a camera / batteries / charger (if using a camera)
- sunglasses, sun block, sunburn remedies
- insect repellent
- small first aid kit
- ear plugs (both for your roommate snoring and for surrounding noises)
- hat / cap
- waterless hand cleaner or wipes, Kleenex (travel size packets are a good idea as toilet tissue is not always available in all bathrooms)
- flip flops for shower areas
- sneakers

- sweatshirt / jacket
- water bottle
- any pain relievers or first aid items that I might need (Cipro, Gravol, Imodium, tums, Benadryl, etc)
- any personal medications that I will need (be sure to keep these in the original bottle)
- all my needed clothes
- charger cord for my cellphone? tablet?
- GASTORLYTE (helps with dehydration in replacing electrolytes, sodium, etc)
- Snacks (trail mix, granola bars, jerky, etc)
- A small backpack is very useful to carry with you. This also works great to take things back and forth to the school and work site.

*And of course...don't forget to take...a servant attitude....*

*and...a positive, flexible spirit (no space required in your luggage for that!)*

## **DID I PRINT?**

- Two copies of my e-ticket to carry in two different places (not all airports accept digital copies)?
- Two copies of my medical insurance to carry in two different places?
- A color photocopy of my passport to carry with me in another bag?
- Did I leave this information with a family member at home?

## **DO I HAVE?**

- My valid passport?
- My health card?
- A photocopy of my credit or debit card/s if I am taking any?
- Spending money for personal purchases or emergencies (suggest \$150-200 US cash)?
- Food or snacks to eat on the plane?
- The address of where I will be staying in Guatemala which I will need for completing immigration card on the plane? (info will be sent to you close to departure date)



# LET'S LEARN SOME BASIC SPANISH

ENGLISH	SPANISH
Please	POR FAVOR
Thank you	GRACIAS
Hello	HOLA
How are you?	CÓMO ESTÁS
I am good, thank you.	BIEN, GRACIAS
And you?	Y USTED?
My name is _____	MI NOMBRE ES _____
What is your name?	SU NOMBRE?
Nice to meet you!	MUCHO GUSTO
Good morning	BUENOS DÍAS
Good afternoon	BUENOS TARDES
Good evening	BUENOS NOCHES
Child (boy)	NIÑO
Child (girl)	NIÑA
Men	HOMBRES
Women	DAMAS / MUJERES
How old (is she/he)?	Cuántos años
Yes	SÍ
No	NO
Excuse me	PERDONE
How much?	CUÁNTO CUESTA
Where is the bathroom?	DÓNDE ESTÁ EL BAÑO
Goodbye	ADIOS
God bless you	DIOS TE BENDIGA
Stop	DETENER
Go	ER
don't understand	No entiendo
Water	AGUA
You're welcome	CON GUSTO
Very well/very good	MUY BIEN
God	DIOS
The Lord	EL SENOR