

Guatemala Mission Trip - 2020

Suggested Packing List

- Tennis shoes and work boots for construction folks
- Snacks – trail mix, granola bars, raisins, cookies
- Hat for sun protection
- Sunglasses
- Ear plugs for light sleepers
- Hand Sanitizer in travel size bottles (use frequently – esp after washing hands)
- Rain Jacket
- Toiletries (travel size – less than 3oz for carry on (3/1/1 rule – 3oz/1 qt bag/1bg per passenger)
- Sunscreen (travel size)
- Insect repellent (travel size)
- Motion sickness meds for bus travel
- Camera
- Passport plus a copy stored elsewhere in your luggage
- Passport holder to wear under your clothes (waist or neck)
- Watch
- Writing pens
- Scrubs
- Undergarments
- Pants and shirts for evenings and travel
- Long sleeve shirt or jacket
- Tools as described for construction project.

FAQ

Where can I obtain information about the churches where we will be working?

Western Diocese of Guatemala face book page (Region Occidente Episcopal de Guatemala).

Hospitalito Sanatorio Corpus Christi in Patzun (Tecpan Region of Guatemala)

Where will we be working and going in Guatemala?

All flights arrive to Guatemala City in the south central part of the country. We will travel upon arrival to the western parts of the country. One portion of the group will be working the Tecpan area and the other in the farther western region near Chichicastenango. The group in Tecpan will be doing construction projects and minor surgical procedures. The other group will be going out into the small villages of the diocese to do medical clinics under the supervision of a Guatemalan priest and doctor. At the end of our work week, we will spend several days either in Antigua, the old Spanish Colonial capital of the country, or at Lake Atitlan, or both.

What are the accommodations like in Guatemala?

The group in Tecpan will be in cabins near to the Patzun community. The construction team will be staying in a dormitory on the grounds of the hospitalito/orphanage. The larger clinic group will stay close to the communities that are hosting clinics. Bathroom facilities in the accommodations are good, but in rural areas, latrines or outhouses are more common. The hotels at the end of the week are very nice. All hotels have showers, but the presence of hot water at all hours is not guaranteed. All toilet paper is placed in trash cans, as plumbing and sewer systems in Guatemala are not designed to handle paper trash. You'll be surprised at how quickly you get used to this system!

How much luggage am I permitted to take?

One or two checked bags per mission trip member are used to take supplies and other things we might use or leave in Guatemala. One checked bag may have room reserved for personal items from the group that might not fit in carryon luggage. Personal items are packed in carryon bags (size limits for most airlines is 51 linear inches (length + width + height)). It is a good idea to also bring a small personal bag or backpack to carry needed personal items to the work site each day. We will most likely bring some medicines with us, but the majority will be purchased in Guatemala and will be waiting for our arrival.

Are there fundraising activities prior to the trip?

Several annual events are held to help raise funds for the trip, including a community blues fest on November 9th at Saint Peter's. Additional fund raising activities may be scheduled depending upon need.

Are shower shoes needed? Linens?

No, all hotel bathrooms are clean and shower shoes are not required. All linens are provided, but may not include washcloths.

How much money do I need to bring with me?

This depends upon your planned purchases. Our group money will cover all routine meal expenses. American dollars can be exchanged at a bank in Guatemala and ATM cards can be used to withdraw funds. Some places accept American dollars, but the Guatemalan quetzal is the preferred currency in Guatemala. The exchange rate is approximately 7.2 quetzales to one dollar. 7.2Q = 1USD. Guatemalan banks prefer to change larger bills (\$50-\$100). The USD bills that you exchange need to be in excellent condition. Make sure that they are crisp and new and unmarked by any ink stains on the edges. A total of \$300 USD will buy LOTS of souvenirs. Credit/debit cards can be used in large towns and stores. Be sure to let your credit card company or banks that you will be traveling.

Do I need to keep my passport with me at all times?

No, once we are in our hotels, it is best to leave your passport secured at the hotel to avoid pickpockets. A passport holder to wear under your clothes is a safe way to carry it when necessary. While the capital city can be dangerous, especially for travelers who are alone, the countryside and smaller cities are quite safe.

What immunizations are required?

Guatemala does not require any specific immunizations to enter the country. Some immunizations for the traveler require several injections separated in time. It is wise to start any series of injections well in advance of the trip. Several local pharmacies offer these injections – Baker Drug, etc.

Current CDC recommendations for travelers to Guatemala are as follows:

1. Up to date routine immunizations – tetanus, etc.
2. Hepatitis A (usually covers you for 5-7 years)
3. Hepatitis B (lifetime protection for most individuals)
4. Typhoid (usually covers you for 5-7 years)

Malaria preventative is not recommended in the areas where we will be working. Check www.cdc.gov

Are there specific clothing requirements for women or men?

The native Mayans tend to dress rather conservatively. To respect Guatemalan tradition and culture, women (and men) on the team should not wear short shorts or bare midriff blouses. Pants, skirts and shorts at or below the knee are acceptable. Blue jeans for evenings and tourist time are a great option, too.

What is the general schedule for the mission trip?

Saturday and Sunday – Saturday, fly to Guatemala City and journey by bus to the west. We will most likely spend one night in the countryside around Tecpan.

Sunday – half the group stays in Tecpan, half will continue west to Chichicastenango area.

Monday (8-5) through Thursday – work at medical sites as arranged by the diocese and at the hospitalito

Friday noon – Sunday – sightseeing and fly home

What is the weather like?

Guatemala has two seasons – rainy and dry. Rainy season begins in May and lasts through early October. Dry season is October through April. Temperatures are very mild and much cooler in the rainy season. Most days are in the 70's and night in the 50's. In the high altitudes of the mountains, the evenings can be quite cool. Sunscreen is highly recommended due to the altitude which is general between 5,000 and 10,000 feet. A light jacket and or raincoat/poncho is highly recommended.

What type of insects will we encounter?

At these altitudes, mostly just flies. There is generally not a need to worry about mosquitoes, spiders, ants or roaches like we have in Arkansas. It is however, a good idea to bring some insect repellent to be safe.

Do I need to any specific training to go on the trip?

We will be recruiting several nurses and doctors and others with medical training, however there is also a need for people to manage our day – making lunches for our group, etc and for helping with any other teaching we might do – brushing teeth, fitting children’s shoes, fitting glasses, etc. Some of the non-medical and medical volunteers will also assist in dispensing medications.

What is the time commitment to participate on the team?

Regular meetings may be held several months prior to the trip, depending upon the group of participants. These meetings will be an opportunity to firm up our paperwork and documents, discuss and plan financing and fundraising, pack our supplies, and to learn a bit about the Guatemalan culture in advance. If you can’t make meetings, please let Marianne know and you will be provided any handouts, information, etc.

How can I prevent getting sick during my time in Guatemala?

An optional daily antibiotic will be provided for each person during our time in Guatemala. This is a preventative step to guard against bacterial infections. Other steps you can take are to not drink tap water, avoid drinks with ice, use hand sanitizer frequently, and choose foods wisely (items that are cooked or peeled fruits; nothing from street vendors). In general, the restaurants and hotels where we stay provide clean, sanitized water (agua pura) and food and drink are safe. Liquid hand sanitizer is recommended after washing your hands with soap and water.

Is the water safe to drink?

No. Use bottled water (agua pura) for drinking and either bottled water or mouthwash to brush your teeth. The team purchases bottled water upon arrival for the use of all team members. When showering, try to keep from drinking any of the water. Bottled water is widely available in all restaurants and hotels.

What will our transportation in Guatemala be?

We will be on a school bus style vehicle driven by a local Guatemalan resident.

How much personal clothing do I need to bring?

Laundry can be done midweek very inexpensively via the Hotel services. Scrubs would be best, as they identify you as a member of our medical team, and they are easily laundered. Shoes for standing and working a long period of time would be best. Bring casual clothes for the evenings and the weekend.

Will US cellular phones work in Guatemala?

Generally not, however some may work, but have very expensive roaming charges attached. Email and phone card services are widely available in most cities for staying in touch with family. Free WiFi is available at our hotels. The group purchases US minutes for a mobile phone which is available for calling home to check in.

Should I bring my computer or mobile device?

These items are great for staying in touch with home, however, be aware that you will need to safeguard them closely. Some people prefer to be mostly Out Of Touch during the week. Internet service is usually available, but is not necessarily reliable at all times of day.