



○ discovering GUATEMALA

Guatemala's natural beauty and powerful identity stand in stark contrast to its bloody past and troubled present. Mountainous, heavily forested and dotted with Mayan ruins, lakes, volcanoes, orchids and exotic birds, Guatemala is one of the most beautiful countries in Central America.

More than half of Guatemalans are descendants of indigenous Mayans. A substantial proportion of the population is of mixed European and indigenous ancestry known as Ladinos. The Ladinos have long regarded indigenous Guatemalans with disdain, and have excluded them from mainstream social, economic and political activities.

Between 1960 and 1996, Guatemala experienced a 36-year civil war, the *longest* in Latin American history. More than 200,000 people were killed, and 500,000 displaced. About 83 percent of those killed were Mayan, according to a 1999 report written by the U.N.-backed Commission for Historical Clarification titled "Guatemala: Memory of Silence." The report also concluded that 93 percent of human rights violations perpetrated during the conflict were carried out by state forces and military groups.

The war has had a lingering impact on Guatemalans. People lost property, means of livelihood, and the opportunity to attend school – resulting in generations of individuals who are illiterate, in deep poverty and inferior health.

More than half of the population is below the national poverty line, and 15 percent lives in extreme poverty. Poverty is particularly widespread in the countryside and among indigenous communities.

Note: Recognizing that information on Guatemala is readily available on the Internet, we encourage you to learn as much as you can about the political background, history, geography, economics and culture of this amazing country. This document provides a general overview, with some specific information that will help short-term teams appreciate Guatemala even more and understand our work. Going to Guatemala as part of a short-term team is different from a leisure trip or traveling for business. The information provided here can help you prepare for a potentially life-changing experience. Sources used for some country facts include CIA: The World Factbook and BBC News.

Guatemala, with the fourth highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world and the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, faces a serious challenge to reduce chronic undernutrition, currently at 49.3 percent among children under 5 years old.

QUICK FACTS

Full Name: Republic of Guatemala

Population: 14.3 million (UN, 2010)

Capital: Guatemala City

Major Languages: Spanish, and more than 20 indigenous languages

Major Religion: Catholicism, Christianity, and indigenous Mayan beliefs

Life Expectancy: 68 years (men), 75 years (women) (UN)

Monetary Currency: Quetzal

Main Exports: Coffee, sugar, bananas, fruits and vegetables, meat, petroleum

GNI Per Capita: US \$2,620 (World Bank, 2009)



WEATHER

Guatemala's climate is lovely year-round. Many of the drastic climate variations are due to altitude. Generally speaking, December to February are the coldest months of the year. The rainy season begins in May and can extend until November. The warmest months of the year are July and August. Given the temperatures can vary greatly from chilly morning to warm afternoons, it is best to dress in layers.

PASSPORT / VISA

A passport is required for all travelers to Guatemala. All information regarding obtaining a passport can be found at the U.S. Department of State's National Passport Information Center: www.travel.state.gov/passport. This site will detail current fees, acceptable forms of identification, downloadable applications, and passport acceptance facility locations. It takes approximately 6 to 10 weeks for processing. Please allow additional time for gathering necessary documents (photos, birth certificate, etc.).

For an additional fee, the process can be expedited. Information can be found on the above website on "How to Get Your Passport in a Hurry." For those who already have a passport, be sure that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the intended stay in Guatemala.

In addition to a passport, some countries require a visa for entry. A visa is a special permit issued by a country's government to allow a foreign citizen into the country. At this time, a visa is not required for Americans traveling to Guatemala. If you have a passport from a country other than the U.S., you may



need to take extra measures to ensure smooth entrance into and exit from Guatemala. Consult the host country consulate to find out what measures need to be taken.

For the most up-to-date information about travel from the United States to any foreign country, please visit the Department of State's website at: www.travel.state.gov.

VACCINATION INFORMATION

In addition to applying for a passport, you will also need to research vaccinations for your trip well in advance as some vaccinations take time or need to be given in a series to be effective. The best advice regarding vaccinations and any other medications can only come from a qualified physician. Please make an appointment with your family doctor and share with him/her where you are going, how long you will be there and what activities you will be participating in. In consultation with your doctor, you can decide which vaccinations and/or medications will be best for you.

To better familiarize yourself with travel health, please visit the Center for Disease Control's website at www.cdc.gov/travel prior to your visit with your doctor.

LUGGAGE

Luggage should be limited to one checked bag and the allowed carry-on for each team member. While most airlines will allow two checked bags, large amounts of luggage are difficult to transport while in-country. Any extra bags should be used to transport ministry supplies. Please refer to your teams training materials for a packing list.

CULTURAL TIPS



Some will come close to hug you and some may even give you a kiss on the cheek. Others will be very shy and look down instead of looking up at you as they greet.

You must be cautious and ask for permission first before taking a picture of a child. As there have been numerous kidnappings in the past, it is better not to get too close to a child. Don't let your kindness be misinterpreted.



In addition to learning a few words in the native language, paying attention to a few cultural clues can help you build a foundation for a wonderful cross-cultural friendship. These tips are like a map for you during your time in Guatemala. They will not give you the answers to all situations, but they may help you understand why people behave the way they do.

Most native Guatemalans are very polite and friendly. The men are used to shaking hands when they greet, or patting each other on the arm or on the back. Native Guatemalan women are very reserved in their greetings. Often, this will depend on their previous interactions and/or relationships with foreigners or *ladinos* (white Guatemalans).

Please do not bring the following:

- Shorts (except for travel and tour days)
- Tight or revealing clothing (pants, jeans and shirts)
- Low-cut shirts (scoop neck or V-neck)
- Tank tops
- Excessively low-rise jeans or excessively baggy pants
- Shirts that reveal the midriff
- Clothing that has inappropriate or questionable words or pictures
- Clothing with rips, holes or stains

T-shirts. (Capri pants are okay only on tourism days.) If the team is attending a church service, women should wear long skirts and loose-fitting blouses, and men should wear long pants and collared shirts. Except when in the hotel, team members should always wear close-toed shoes.

Out of respect for cultural sensitivity, we request your cooperation in submitting to FH's policy in regard to piercings, tattoos and radical haircuts. For more details about this topic, please talk to your team leader.

ELECTRONICS

You may bring cameras (disposable, standard or digital), iPods, cell phones and other small electronic devices; however, you assume all risks of damage, loss or theft of your belongings. Keep in mind that you will be kept quite busy, and there will not be a lot of time to use many electronic devices. Also, electricity may not always be available to recharge electronic equipment, including cameras and camcorders. Please bring extra batteries. When in public, don't display expensive electronic items or any items that may just appear expensive.

PHOTO POLICY

All photos or videos should be taken with utmost discretion. Upon arrival in the country, your Team Coordinator will explain the country's photo policy. Some considerations:

- Make sure the focus is on relationships and the ministry, not pictures.
- When possible, ask before taking pictures.
- Designate a photographer. Rather than taking the same picture on 12 different cameras, take the picture with one or two cameras and share when you get back.
- Be sure that any picture you take conveys dignity for the person in the picture. If you will not remember the names of the people in the story or the significance of the photo, re-consider the need for taking a photo.

Guatemalan people have polite manners overall. When you sit down to eat, you must take your hat off. After your meal, be sure to say *muchas gracias*, especially if you have locals sitting down with you. They will appreciate this as a nice gesture.

Come with a humble heart, ready to learn. This is key to having a wonderful time here in Guatemala.

CLOTHING

Our dress code is a sign of respect for the people you will be working with, as well as to convey a conservative Christian lifestyle. Wearing appropriate clothing will open the door for establishing good relationships with the community members.

While in the community and during tourism days, team members should wear long pants and loose-fitting





FOOD

Your Team Coordinator will have arranged breakfast, lunch and dinner for your team. You will have the opportunity to sample a variety of food while in Guatemala, both traditional dishes and some American favorites. While some dishes may be unfamiliar, please come with an open mind and be willing to try what has been prepared for you. Lunches will often be peanut butter and jelly or tuna sandwiches. There will be plenty of food provided; however, there may not always be a lot of variety. You are welcome to bring additional food for between-meals snacks.

Avoid eating foods that have not been provided or approved by Food for the Hungry staff. Eating something from a local vendor or street market could lead to sickness. If you have any food allergies or special dietary needs, please communicate those to FH/US ahead of time. Our field staff will need time to arrange other options for you.

Your Team Coordinator will also have a supply of bottled water for your team. Drink bottled water only. Also use it to brush your teeth and take medicines. If you are served ice in a drink, please verify that the water is okay by consulting with your Team Coordinator.

TRANSPORTATION

Your Team Coordinator will have arranged transportation the entire time your team is serving with Food for the Hungry. The team will travel in a van from Guatemala City to either Nebaj or San Cristobal, depending on where your team is serving. When traveling to the communities, you will either ride in a van or in the back of a pick-up truck. Generally, FH teams do not use public transportation.

Driving in Guatemala may be a new experience for you. The roads are likely to be bumpy and winding. You may feel that the vehicle you are in is uncomfortably close to the vehicle or pedestrian beside it. Streets may seem overwhelmingly crowded. Traffic signs may not always be followed. Remember that you are in good hands. Your driver is a professional and used to the traffic conditions. Keep your hands, feet and belongings inside the vehicle at all times. If you experience carsickness, especially for the long drive between Guatemala City and Nebaj/San Juan Chamelco, sit in the front or take an appropriate medicine for motion sickness.

COMMUNICATION

You will likely be without telephone and/or e-mail access during your time in Guatemala. While these services may be readily available, especially in major cities, your schedule will be packed with activities.

Foods you will probably be eating:

- Chicken (at Pollo Campero, a restaurant specializing in chicken)
- Fried plantains (bananas)
- Atol de platano (hot beverage made with plantains)
- Meat stew with vegetables
- Guatemalan barbecue
- Arroz con leche (hot drink made of rice and milk)
- Black beans
- Corn tortillas



This will help you to focus your energy and attention on the transformative work of the Lord and to help maintain a cohesive group dynamic. We encourage you to leave your cell phone at home and inform your family and friends that you will be unavailable until you return to the States.

If there is an emergency in the country or community where you are serving, your Team Coordinator will contact your family and appropriate people at your home church. Before you leave the U.S. you will be given a U.S. phone number and other details, which you will pass on to your family and close friends. If there is an emergency in the U.S. while you're on the field, your family member or friend may call that number. Your Field Liaison will assess the call and facilitate communication with you or the field staff as necessary.

Miscellaneous

Time:

EST + 1 hour.
PST - 2 hours

Electricity:

You will find standard American outlets.

Weights and Measures:

Metric



MONEY

While with Food for the Hungry, all transportation, food, lodging and water are covered by FH. You will only need money for souvenirs and shopping that you will do in-country and while traveling. A suggested amount for this purpose is \$100 to \$200. It is advisable to bring cash as U.S. dollars are widely accepted. You may exchange money in the airport upon your arrival if you want, but you will also have the opportunity to exchange money later at the regional FH office. Bring bills no larger than \$20 and be sure that the bills are crisp and new (no more than 5 years old) to ensure acceptance. Traveler's checks can be used, but they can only be exchanged in limited locations and extra fees always apply.

FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY/GUATEMALA

FH/Guatemala began its work in 1976 after an earthquake killed more than 23,000 people and left 1 million without homes. The initial work consisted of relief work and coordination with government entities and churches in providing food, clothing, materials for temporary shelters, and medical attention to affected families and communities.

In 1981, FH/Guatemala registered as a nongovernment organization and began to focus on finding sponsors for school-age children in the region of Zacapa and semi-urban areas of the capital, Guatemala City.

In 1987, we left Zacapa and Guatemala City to focus on the regions of Solola, San Juan Sacatepequez, Nebaj Quiche, and San Cristobal Alta Verapaz. FH/Guatemala implemented projects in education, health and agriculture, and continued to develop child sponsorship as the base of our work.

In 1994, we focused our work on the regions of Nebaj Quiche and San Cristobal Verapaz. Because sustainability had not been achieved in the communities, FH/Guatemala began new programs incorporating biblical worldview foundation. Education became the primary focus of all the programs, prioritizing the development of children and youth.

In 2006, the central office of FH/Guatemala moved once again to the capital, Guatemala City, with the purpose of strengthening its relationship with other institutions and making known the ministry of FH within government entities, other NGOs and national churches.

Today, FH/Guatemala is working through the Child Focused Community Transformation (CFCT) program in 37 communities of two regions: Ixil and Alta Verapaz. Our work with the most vulnerable and indigenous groups puts us in the forefront of overcoming all forms of poverty in Guatemala. With integrated and biblically based programming, we seek to help children reach their God-given potential and become change agents in their own families and communities.

FH PROGRAMS

The Child Focus Community Transformation Program (CFCTP) consists of five projects:

- Health and Nutrition
- Water and Sanitation
- Economic Development
- Education
- Strengthening Leadership

Health and Nutrition: Focuses on children under 5 years old with activities like growth promotion sessions where each child receive personal attention, home visits to provide counseling to their mothers, and education about the nutritional status of their children.

Water and Sanitation: Focuses in four areas: water systems improvement, water source conservation, operation and maintenance, and safe water for consumption.

Economic Development: Focuses on agriculture development and promote handicrafts to facilitate livelihood opportunities for women.

Education: Focuses on sharing principles and values in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. It also provides school supplies, school tuitions (for high school students only), and follow-up to the parents through home visits.

Strengthening Leadership: FH/Guatemala works with leaders and churches in the communities to equip parents with life skills. They also receive training in biblical worldview to help them understand that God has a plan and a future for them and their families.

Prayer Requests

- Pray that God would open the eyes of the government leaders and authorities so they could see the needs in Guatemala, not only the physical poverty but the spiritual poverty as well.
- Pray for churches, the body of Christ, to continue to grow and shine God's light in Guatemala.
- Pray that FH/Guatemala would work in greater unity to proclaim and demonstrate the love of Christ to others.
- Pray for all followers of Jesus in Guatemala to live a life that demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit.

