

GUATEMALA



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COUNTRY INFORMATION



COUNTRY INFORMATION: GUATEMALA



Capital: Guatemala City

Population: 13+ million

Area: 42,043 sq. miles

Languages: Spanish & Q'eqchi

Government: Constitutional Democratic Republic

Neighboring Countries: Mexico, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador

Area to be visited: Polochic-Senahu Region (Chulac) of the state of Alta Verapaz.

Overall, Guatemala is a safe country in which to travel. As with most countries, crime is generally present in the larger cities and is mostly non-violent towards tourists. The Polochic-Senahu Region has a very low crime rate.

(country information courtesy of CHOICE Humanitarian)

GUATEMALA CULTUREGRAM

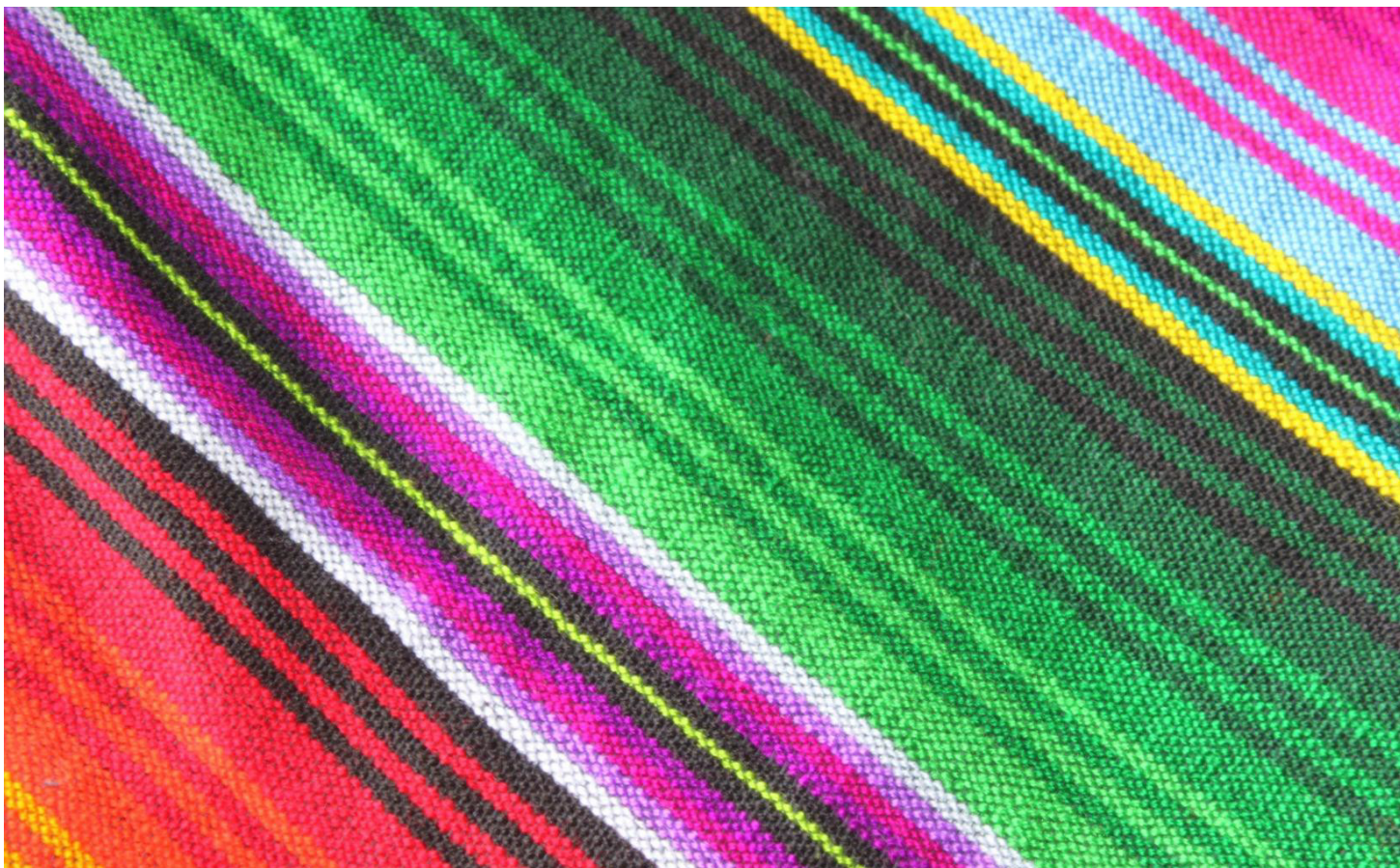
<http://familyhumanitarian.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/AboutGuatemalaCultureGram.pdf>

PASSPORT TO POLOCHIC

<http://issuu.com/familyhumanitarian/docs/polochicpassport?mode=window&viewMode=singlePage>

CURRENCY

The Guatemalan currency is the Quetzal (GTQ), which has been roughly \$1 USD = 8 Quetzals for some time. To verify current exchange rates, visit <http://finance.yahoo.com/currency-converter/#from=USD;to=EUR;amt=1>



ELECTRICITY

While electricity may be available to charge camera batteries at different times, don't plan on it. Extra batteries are helpful for cameras and other electronic equipment. Standard 2-prong plugs used in the U.S. work in Guatemala (110-120 volts/60 Hertz).

WEATHER

July and August are in the rainy season, which can bring with it a thick, red mud. Days are generally hot and humid with cooler air in the evenings. Highs are generally 80-85° F and lows are 55-60° F, but with the high humidity, it feels much warmer. Other times of the year are milder.

PRECAUTIONS

While theft is more of a problem in the cities such as Guatemala City rather than in the Polochic Region, take appropriate precautions by ensuring that you keep your money and passport with you in a hidden place, such as a money belt under your shirt. Do not leave your belongings unattended. Keep cameras on a strap and don't walk or travel by yourself alone or after dark.

EXPEDITION LOGISTICS



Visit www.familyhumanitarian.org for in-depth details about all aspects of the expedition.

EXPEDITION FEES

A deposit of \$300 is due for registration and will be applied to the \$1195 per person expedition fee. This fee covers food, lodging, and transportation during the expedition as well as training materials and costs for the construction project. Expedition fees are mostly tax deductible. For more information, visit the link below:

<http://familyhumanitarian.org/expeditions/guatemala/>

Costs that are the responsibility of each expeditioner include: airfare and associated taxes, any travel on your own, document costs (passport, visas, etc.), immunizations, and insurance. **Any meals eaten away from the group will be the responsibility of each participant.**

We recommend that you bring cash for souvenirs and for any additional personal expenses you might incur. A money pouch or belt is helpful to keep the money safely hidden.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Visit <http://familyhumanitarian.org/registration/cancellation-policy/> for information on FH's cancellation policy.

TRAVEL DATES

Each participant is responsible for their own transportation to Guatemala.

For travel dates, visit <http://familyhumanitarian.org/expeditions/guatemala/>

PRE & POST TRAVEL

Expedition participants are free to organize their own travel before or after the expedition, but they must attend orientation the first day of the expedition and depart from the village the final day of the expedition.



TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

For detailed information, visit <http://familyhumanitarian.org/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

PASSPORT OR VISA (if applicable)

A current passport is needed to travel internationally. The expiration date should be no less than 6 months **after** the end of the expedition.

CHILD AFFIDAVIT

A notarized Child Affidavit may be needed if a child is traveling with only one parent or a guardian OR is under 18.

TRAVELER'S INSURANCE

Trip cancellation insurance is recommended to cover unforeseen circumstances that may arise and cause unexpected delays or flight cancellations. For more information and for recommendations of insurance companies, visit <http://familyhumanitarian.org/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE

Due to the lack of medical services in remote areas, FH **requires** all participants to purchase a minimum of \$25,000 in medical evacuation insurance and to send in proof of this insurance. **FH is not responsible for the cost of medical care, or any damage incurred during or as a result of a FH expedition.** You can compare policies and options at travelinsurance.com. This is not generally covered by your health insurance.

TRANSPORTATION

Once in Guatemala, FH will arrange pickup of participants at the airport and arrange all other transportation needs during the expedition.

We encourage you to travel in the country on your own if you desire before or after the expedition, in which case, you may coordinate transportation (as well as to and from the airport) to meet your needs.

LODGING & SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Rooms have been reserved at the Hotel Barcelo in Guatemala City for the first and last night of the expedition. While in the Polochic Valley, accommodations will be with the group in a common area. If this poses a problem for health reasons, let us know so that we can discuss alternate arrangements with you.

If families or individuals desire to do so, a tent may be used for sleeping. Please ensure that you pack a sleeping bag and a pillow, and any other items needed for your comfort, as the accommodations in the Polochic Valley will be rustic. It is likely that you'll be sleeping on a cement floor and **men and women may be sleeping in the same room, with separate changing areas**. Sleeping pads or air mattresses are highly recommended. Earplugs are **very** helpful.

FOOD & WATER



Meals during the expedition will be provided for by FH and will be prepared locally. Precautions will be taken to ensure that US-standard sanitary practices are observed. **Fruits and vegetables will be washed in chlorinated water to ensure they are safe to eat.** If eating with local families, ensure that you are not wasteful.

Ensure that you wash your hands before you eat or put your hands near your mouth.

If traveling on your own, ensure that the food in restaurants is well-cooked and served hot. Buffets are generally not recommended. Fruits and vegetables with a peel are safest.

If you desire to venture out and eat other fruits and vegetables, ask whether they have been rinsed with purified water.

Take precautions with the water in Guatemala by using bottled or filtered water only, even for brushing your teeth. FH will provide bottled water. If traveling on your own, also take precautions that the ice is made from purified water. Ensure that you drink throughout the day to avoid dehydration.

SHOWERS & RESTROOMS

Arrangements have been made for showers and toilet facilities. Please keep in mind, however, that the accommodations are rustic. Bring your own toiletries and towel as well as toilet paper just in case. Bring a swimsuit and water shoes/flip flops for showers, as facilities are not always completely private. Be conscious of water usage.

WORKSHOPS & CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Visit <http://familyhumanitarian.org/programs/> for more information on the workshops and construction project.

Keep in mind that we are there to help; that sometimes requires patience with the villagers as well as other expeditioners. We're there to both work to help the villagers improve their circumstances as well as to take moments of down time to connect with and learn from them, play games, etc.

SUNDAY SERVICES

If applicable, LDS Sunday worship services will be held for those who wish to attend but are strictly optional.

COMMUNICATION

While you will likely not be in cell phone range, in the event of an emergency, your family can contact you by calling Guillermo Lopez, the in-country logistics coordinator, at +011+502+3355-9119. Due to the remoteness of the area, there may be delays in getting messages to you, although every attempt will be made.

For email purposes, Internet cafes are available in Guatemala City.

MEDICATIONS



In addition to bringing any medications you take on a regular basis, recommended medications include the following medications listed below. Consult with your physician to ensure that none of them interfere with medications you are currently taking. It is recommended that you bring enough medication for the length of the expedition as well as extra in case of emergencies. Due to limited availability of medication in developing countries, don't plan to rely on purchasing them in-country. Also, ensure they are in their original containers to prevent problems with Customs.

Prescription Medications:

- Azithromycin for traveler's diarrhea. (Recommended: one full prescription for each member of the family.)
- Ambien for a sleep aid. (optional)
- Zofran for motion sickness. (optional)
- Malaria prophylaxis (optional)

Locally, it is reported that there is no malaria in the area to which we are traveling and most do not recommend preventative medication. Out of hundreds of expeditioners in the past, only one has contracted malaria and the source was unclear. However, consult with your physician/travel clinic for recommendations.

Non-prescription Medications:

- Imodium for traveler's diarrhea symptoms.
- Pepto Bismol tablets for diarrhea or upset stomach.
- Benadryl or Tylenol PM for a sleep aid if you don't have access to Ambien.
- Ibuprofen for minor aches and pains.

ATTIRE

Guatemalans in general, especially in this area of the Polochic Region, are very modest. Expeditioners, particularly females, are urged to wear pants, skirts or shorts that go to the knees. We don't recommend bringing expensive clothing; it's possible that the red mud common during the rainy season may stain clothing.

CODE OF CONDUCT

FH's code of conduct during expeditions includes no use of alcohol, smoking and drugs as well as the wearing of modest apparel. This code also includes non-married members of the opposite sex not sleeping in the same tent or bed.

ENGAGING WITH THE LOCALS

Consider bringing pictures of your family, nail polish to paint fingernails, bubbles to play with the children, equipment to play sports games (soccer, football, jump rope, etc.), or instruments to share music. Playing a simple game of tag or showing them a new dance or learning words from their language can be good ways to connect. Encourage locals to share something important to them – a dance, music, or making a local craft.

It's about the people, not the projects.



GIFTING POLICY

In order to ensure we don't create a handout-mentality, we have a policy of no gifting (even small things like candies). Our goal is to create relationships and friendships rather than being looked to for handouts. This also prevents the problem of some villagers receiving things that others do not, which can create bad feelings.

However, if you have items that you would like to donate to the community (such as sports equipment or school supplies) or have large quantities of items you'd like to donate, contact Michaela Shirley at michaela.s@familyhumanitarian.org to discuss.

Also, please do not make promises to the villagers for work opportunities, scholarships, etc. If you would like to help the villagers in any way, please work through FH Leadership.

For more information, visit <http://familyhumanitarian.org/expeditions/what-to-expect/>

WHAT TO EXPECT

Visit <http://familyhumanitarian.org/expeditions/what-to-expect/> for things to expect on the expedition.

What Youth Can Expect

Youth can expect to have an amazing cultural experience as they work and play alongside their parents and the local villagers. Activities for youth will include:

- Teaching opportunities
- Building/construction opportunities
- Group games with villagers such as basketball, Frisbee, and kickball
- Group art and craft projects such as bracelet making and drawing
- Talent Sharing (encouraged to bring harmonicas or balls for juggling or other talents to share)
- Hikes
- Evening sharing sessions to help youth internalize their expedition experiences

JUST REMEMBER: Things in Guatemala move on Guatemala time!

Things tend to move slower and less efficiently than you may be accustomed. Unexpected delays and changes in plans are common. Expect the unexpected! Flexibility will make your experience much more enjoyable.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)



For other questions, visit the FAQ section at <http://familyhumanitarian.org/about-us/faqs/> or contact Carrie Kirk at carrie.k@familyhumanitarian.org

TO DOS



FORMS & REQUIRED INFORMATION

Please make sure that flight itineraries and flight and passport information are uploaded to your registration forms as soon as possible. To make sure that you can access your registration account, please use the link provided on your registration confirmation email to set up an account.

If you are traveling with a minor who is not accompanied by both parents, you may want to carry an Authorization for minor to travel form with you during your travels.

VACCINATIONS & IMMUNIZATIONS

While current guidelines from the U.S. Center for Disease Control don't require vaccinations for entering Guatemala, a Hepatitis A shot and/or Typhoid may be wise.

Participants from countries other than the United States should check with their consulate to ensure there are no other restrictions that apply.

PREPARATION

Visit <http://familyhumanitarian.org/expeditions/guatemala-2012/how-to-prepare/> to find out specific ways you can prepare physically and mentally to make the most out of your expedition experience.



PACKING LIST

The recommendations on this checklist reflect the experience expedition participants and FH Leaders on previous expeditions. Please contact Carrie Kirk at carrie.k@familyhumanitarian.org for specific needs or concerns.

Be sure to check the weather forecast prior to departure to ensure appropriate packing. It is wise to think in **layers** when preparing for a service trip abroad. Highs most days about 80-85° F, but with the humidity, it often feels warmer. Low is generally 55-60° F and evenings are cool. Rain is very possible. Please check with your airline regarding luggage allowances (as well as luggage fees for excess weight). FH will not be responsible for such fees. Participants have found that packing everything in bags keeps clothes clean and smelling nice. Bringing a bag for dirty clothes throughout the expedition is also recommended.

One golden piece of advice: Leave behind a clean change of clothes at the hotel or keep a clean change of clothes inside a bag during the entire expedition so that there is a fresh outfit to wear upon your return to Guatemala City.

- Quick-Dry Clothing – Any athletic, quick-dry, wicking type clothing is very helpful, but the purchase of new clothing is not necessary. Consider packing clothing that could be donated upon departure.
 - 4 t-shirts or work shirts (they may get ruined)
 - 3-4 casual shirts (optional if you prefer to change at the end of the day)
 - 3-4 work pants
 - 3-4 casual comfortable pants (or long skirts for lady's) for evening wear
 - 1 pair of modest shorts
 - Church clothing if you plan to attend Sunday Sacrament meeting
 - 8-10 underwear and sox, enough for the entire trip
 - 1-2 pair of walking shoes (well-built tennis shoes or hiking shoes are best. They will get dirty and may get wet.)
 - Jacket/Sweatshirt for possible cool mornings and evenings
 - Pajamas
 - Raincoat, trash bag or poncho (rain boots may be purchased in the village if needed)
 - Hat or sun visor
 - Swimsuit and Water Shoes or Chaco's/Keen's for the waterfall and possibly showering
 - Flip-flops for the shower if not using Chaco's, etc.
- Toiletries
 - Shampoo and conditioner
 - Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss and mouthwash
 - Skin Cleanser
 - Small Mirror
 - Tweezers
 - Lip balm

- Soap
- Feminine products
- Hairbrush
- Face wipes
- Deodorant
- Towel, any compact microfiber/quick dry is best (For example, search [Darchen Microfiber Beach towels.](#))
- Medications (see medications page 8-9)
 - Personal medication (carry-on in event of lost luggage)
 - Small First-aid kit (band aid's, moleskin, antibiotic cream, chigger cream, decongestant, constipation medicine, pain reliever, hydrocortisone cream, cough drops, etc.)
 - Sleep Aid and [Silicone](#) or other preferred Ear Plugs
- Personal journal and pen
- Hand sanitizer and/or antibacterial wet wipes
- Sunscreen
- Insect Repellent (optional: treat clothing with Permethrin insect repellent)
- Water Bottle
- Pocket size pouches of tissue and/or toilet paper for use away from camp
- A power bank and/or power strip can come in handy
- Clothes pins or safety pins for hanging cloths
- Sunglasses
- Backpack to carry with you to villages on a daily basis, guaranteed to get dirty
- Snacks and comfort food
- Extra money/Debit Card for ATM Use
- Sleeping Gear
 - Ground mat/air mattress, compact backpacking style works best for packing (For example, search [Klymit Static V2 Sleeping Pad](#))
 - Sleeping Bag, small and lightweight is best. (For example, search [Ecoopro Warm Weather Sleeping Bag](#))
 - Pillow, We recommend the [Mainstays Travel Pillow.](#)
 - Tent, many people prefer to have a tent for privacy, it is not required but should be considered
 - Head Lamp or compact flashlight
- Anything you can use to engage local village children – they love nail polish, bubbles, balls, jump ropes, games, storybooks, etc. Remember we have a no gifting policy. We do not leave items with individuals, but the items you bring may be donated to village leaders or schools when we leave.
- Games, cards, basketball, etc. for downtime with the group in the evenings
- Work Gloves
- Tools – we will provide more information during the zoom meeting on any tools that might be helpful to bring with you if you already own them.
- PHAST curriculum
- Materials for evening thought
- Passports (it's a great idea to carry either a hardcopy or digital copy of your passport)
- Proof of Covid Testing and Vaccination as currently required

PACKING TIPS

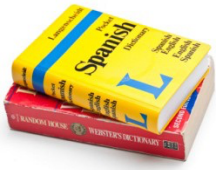
1. **Pack as lightly as possible.** You will be responsible to handle your entire luggage during any transfers or excursions. Suitcases or duffle bags with wheels are helpful.
2. **Don't bring large amounts of items in your personal medical pouch.** You will only need a small supply of each item; if necessary, more can be purchased in country.
3. **Make a copy of your passport picture page and put it in your suitcase** (expedites replacement of a lost passport).
4. **Suitcase/duffle bag dimensions are limited to a cumulative total of 62 inches (W+H+L).**
5. **When you check in for your domestic flight, check your baggage all the way through to the final destination.** Be prepared to show your international e-ticket. You should not be charged the domestic baggage charge (luggage on domestic connections to international flights should not incur a baggage charge). We recommend that you keep your baggage claim tickets in an easily accessible place in case of lost luggage.

DO NOT BRING

- Expensive jewelry or watches
- Expensive clothing
- Chocolate; it melts



LANGUAGE PREPARATION



Both Spanish and Q'eqchi are spoken in the Polochic Region, however Q'eqchi is most commonly spoken in the Polochic Region. Below are some common Q'eqchi words and phrases. For more detailed information, download the [Spanish](#) and [Q'eqchi](#) language cheat-sheets.

(**X** = “sh” sound / **J** = “h” sound / **W** = “kw” or “qu” sound)

ENGLISH

Hello - How Are You? (*happy in your heart?*)

I am fine (*happy in my heart*)

What's up?

How is your family?

How are your children?

My name is Martha

What is your name?

Mother

Father

Brother

Sister

Children

Grandmother

Grandfather

Yes

No

Thank you

You're welcome

Pardon me (I'm sorry)

I don't understand

Good

Pretty

Water

Food

Good (delicious)

Goodbye

Good morning

Good evening

Q'EQCHI

Ma Sa Laa Ch'ool?

Laa'in Sa Lin Ch'ool

K'aru Ta K'ul

Chanru Wan Laa Jun Kab'al?

Chan Ru Wankeb' Laa Kok'al?

Ani Laa K'aba Martha

Chanru Laa K'aba?

Na'

Yuwa'

Asb'ej

Anab'ej

Kok'al

Na'chin

Wa'chin

Henh'

Ink'a

B'antiox

K'ulbilex

Chi Na Kuyaq'

In K'a Nan Taw Ru

Us

Ch'inaus

Ha'

Xtib'el Wa'

Saasa

In Wanb'i

Ch'owa (*man*) | Ch'ona (*woman*)

Ch'owa (*man*) | Ch'ona (*woman*)

(adapted from CHOICE Humanitarian)



We look forward to seeing you
on the expedition!

