



TEAM MANUAL GUATEMALA SERVICE PROJECTS



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ABOUT GUATEMALA SERVICE PROJECTS

MISSION STATEMENT

The nonprofit corporation, Guatemala Service Projects Inc, exists to provide resources to impoverished people in Guatemala. We will plan, organize and implement service projects that improve the health or literacy of Guatemalan children and families. Some examples of health improvements include installing high-efficiency wood-burning stoves that vent outside the home, installing water filters and providing training on their care and use, providing prenatal vitamins to expectant mothers, and providing supplies and tools to trained medical staff in Guatemala. Some examples of literacy improvements may include providing schools with libraries or technology, providing teacher training, or providing assistance in the form of student sponsorship.

OUR STAFF

Guatemala Service Projects staff is dedicated to give you an incredible personal experience in Guatemala. We promise to provide team members with efficient, dependable, professional, and kind service.



JENNIFER DEMAR

My name is Jennifer Demar. I am the president of Guatemala Service Projects and also fulfill the role of treasurer. My husband John and I are the proud parents of three children, two of them adopted from Guatemala. Maria is 22, Scott is 20 and Sarah is 13. Maria and Scott are proud of their heritage and have both accompanied us on trips to Guatemala. Our trips are meant to be family-style, with activities suitable for all ages. Sarah went for the first time when she was just 7 years old!

president@guatasp.org

RICHARD TRENT FAITH

My name is Trent Faith, although among my academic peers, I am known by my first name (Richard) as Trent is my middle name. I live in Oconomowoc with my wife, Cindi, and our two sons, JT and Barret. I serve as the vice-president of Guatemala Service Projects and before that traveled to Guatemala with Waukesha County Technical College on Transcultural Healthcare trips.

vicepresident@guatasp.org



JEN SCRATCH

My name is Jen Scratch. My husband (Ron Scratch) and I live with our son Julian (adopted from Guatemala) in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. I am the secretary for Guatemala Service Projects. I have not been able to travel as much to Guatemala as I would have liked, but I look forward to joining a trip with you if I am able!

secretary@guatasp.org

DIEGO XIRÚM

My name is Diego Xirúm. I live and work in Guatemala, near the city of Chichicastenango. I work with the staff of Guatemala Service Projects to help coordinate projects, communicate with leaders in the beneficiary communities, assist with translation and offer my services as a tour guide. I will be with you during the trip and look forward to meeting you and becoming friends!



ABOUT OUR TEAMS

GROUP SIZE AND PARTICIPATION

The number of people in a group will be a minimum of 4 and a preferred maximum of 21. Any changes from this size must be approved by the Guatemala Service Projects staff. Work team dates can be open to anyone who wishes to participate, meaning interested people will be participating in a group of different origins, but will travel and work together in Guatemala.

The *Skills and Experience* questionnaire which is completed during the application process is used as a general guide to help our staff anticipate the type of work that a group may be effective in doing. People with highly specialized skills (computer/network techs, teachers/medical professionals, etc.) **may** have opportunity to use their skills if the team is focused on such a task. However, work is planned to allow as many people to participate as possible, and we may not be able to utilize these more specific skills. People are encouraged to become involved in the planned projects without expecting to use specific skills.

Guatemala Service Projects is a humanitarian group. As such, certain standards and expectations are in place to protect the group and the children with whom it works. All participants are asked to adhere to a Code of Conduct, and failure to do so may result in the person being returned to his/her home community early, at their own expense and without refund.

Persons over the age of 7 are welcome to participate. For younger children, it is important for the parent to remember that his/her full appreciation of the trip will be limited due to the increased need for child supervision in the new environment. **Children under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent/guardian/assigned chaperone.** Senior citizens are also welcome to participate but must be independent and able to tolerate the increased demands of higher elevation and sometimes strenuous activity of walking on steep hills, etc.

NOTE: When our staff knows that younger children or older adults will be on the trip, projects can be altered to allow for flexibility to suit persons or families with needs and considerations based on age.

LODGING

The facility/hotel you will be staying in is not owned or operated by Guatemala Service Projects, and is reserved for your stay. Please respect this property. Some of the facilities allow for "family rooms," while others are double/triple/quad occupancy hotel rooms, depending on the team size and lodging choice. Accommodating families or special groups together will be attempted.

General Guidelines

1. Please respect any specific facility instructions which you may be given which are not included in the general guidelines outlined below.
2. Quiet time is 10 PM (unless otherwise posted).
3. Electric power is standard 120v like in the USA/Canada. Outlets are generally similar to those found in the USA/Canada as well, but bringing a three-prong adaptor is recommended as some outlets may not have a ground.
4. Laundry service is available at cost.
5. The septic systems in Guatemala are very problematic, so do not flush toilet paper, but put it in the appropriate trash container provided.
6. Tipping of staff is appreciated. We handle this as part of the trip fee, so it is not necessary to leave individual tips.

FOOD



All meals (except for meals in airports on the way to and from Guatemala) are covered by the all-inclusive price paid. Whether we stay in lodging that allows for “at-home” meal prep, are eating at a restaurant, or enjoying a traditional meal prepared by friends of ours in Guatemala, there are no hidden meal costs. The exceptions to this would be if you order drinks from a bar or obtain snacks from street vendors or tiendas.

Special food requirements must be submitted to a staff member when signing up to participate on the team, who will investigate if those can be accommodated. Due to the lack of availability and use of local personnel for the group food preparation, some special food needs may not be able to be accommodated. However, we choose restaurants that have vegetarian options.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to and from work/project locations is on private buses and vans and driven by hired approved drivers. They will be safe and functional. Once at a destination, if we choose to take tuk tuks rather than walk, the availability of certain drivers may not be guaranteed, at which point we would flag down whoever is available.

(pictured first is a tuk tuk and second, an example of the private transport we would use)



HOW TO JOIN A GUATEMALA SERVICE PROJECTS TRIP

PROCESS FOR GUATEMALA SERVICE PROJECTS GROUP PARTICIPATION

1. Consider involvement in a short-term service team.
2. Review the project implementation schedules and select dates which will fit into your schedule
3. Complete the paperwork
 - a. *Team Member Application*
 - b. *Skills Questionnaire*
 - c. *Emergency Contact information*
 - d. *Release and Waiver of Liability*
 - e. *Code of Conduct form*
 - f. *Medical History form*
4. Obtain/update passport (**must be valid at least 6 months after your return date**).
5. Begin appropriate immunizations (see recommendations in *Health Information* and contact your local Travel Medicine health care provider).

* Completed paperwork should be mailed to us at the address below, or delivered in person if applicable:

Guatemala Service Projects Inc.
PO Box 441
Oconomowoc, WI 53066

TIMELINE

UPON MAKING INITIAL DECISION TO FORM A TEAM

- a. Let Jennifer Demar know that you wish to participate and the approximate number of people that will be traveling with you and dates you will be participating.
- b. If doing fundraising for the trip, send out letters requesting donations.
- c. Purchase flight.
- d. Review recommended health and immunizations for areas you will be visiting.

THREE MONTHS PRIOR TO TRIP DATE

Paperwork -- Submit application and related forms to Jennifer Demar (president@guatasp.org), and submit signed and notarized copies to us at the address above

Health -- Continue appropriate immunizations (see *Health Information*).

Financial – Send 50% of the monies due to Guatemala Service Projects at the address above. (If it is more convenient for you, payment can be made in total at this time.)

SIX WEEKS PRIOR TO TRAVEL

Financial – Send remaining 50% of the monies due, if payment has not already been made in full.

TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO TRIP DATE

1. Team packing meeting for any gifts, donations items, project supplies, etc., if traveling as a group.
2. See Packing Recommendations.
3. Confirm travel arrangements with Jennifer Demar.
4. For US citizens, registration of your travels with the US Embassy in Guatemala is recommended. This can be done online at <https://step.state.gov/step/>

TRAVEL AND AIRPORT INFORMATION

All travelers are required to have valid passports to enter Guatemala (**valid for at least 6 months after your return date**). A visitor's visa will be granted by Immigration at the airport. On the immigration paperwork, you fill out on the plane prior to entry, you should check "visitor" as for purpose of your visit and list "(destination city), Guatemala" as your destination, unless otherwise instructed by a member of the Guatemala Service Projects staff. (**At time of travel you will have the name and address of your chosen hotel**).

We will notify you of any specific information regarding luggage, as it varies by airline. In general, each traveler is allowed one to two "check in" pieces of luggage (maximum weight of 50 lbs., maximum size of 62 cumulative inches (length + height + width), and one "carry on" of no more than 22 lbs. and 45 cumulative inches. Often a "personal item" (purse, computer bag etc.) is also allowed. (**check with airline for baggage fees**).

You will pass through Customs after you have collected your baggage. Team members should wait until all the luggage has been collected by the members before passing on to Customs. Luggage may be randomly checked by the Customs officials. Know what is in the bags that you have checked in, as you may be asked. NOTE: It is our goal as a group to take as many donations in checked luggage as possible. Therefore, if you are willing, we ask that you please try to pack all of your clothing and personal items in the carry-on bag that is taken on the plane. The checked bag(s) you transport will contain donations (books, medical supplies, hygiene items, vitamins, diapers, etc.) and the checked bag fee will be paid by Guatemala Service Projects. Also, we have an ample stockpile of donated luggage that we use to transport the donations, so we can provide these suitcases for you.

We will be traveling with you, so if you need help, don't hesitate to ask. We can help each other with luggage and will exit the airport together so we can wait for our private transport.

TRAVELER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

DRESS CODE

The weather of most of the areas where you will be working will be in the 70s – 80s during the day but may be quite cool in the evening, especially during the rainy season (May to September), so a sweatshirt or layered clothing may be needed.

The sun can be quite intense, and due to the elevation, sunscreen is recommended, even on seemingly cloudy days.

Some of the more traditional peoples of Guatemala are very conservative in their dress style. In recognition of this, **Guatemala Service Projects requests that team members dress modestly**. For women, please do not wear miniskirts, short shorts or spaghetti straps on days that we will be in rural villages doing service. For men, shirts are to be worn at all times, unless we are engaged in water sports. Generally, older clothing is better to bring for the work projects since you may get them dirty. For dinners out, clean casual attire is generally acceptable. Unless otherwise noted, you will not need formal wear. **A backpack** can be used to carry snacks, personal items, water bottles, a camera, etc. For safety on the work site, sneakers or work shoes must be worn (no flip-flops or sandals).

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES / CULTURE SHOCK

You will be confronted with many differences while visiting Guatemala. North Americans may find these very frustrating. Please have patience and understanding, as you need to respect the culture while you are visiting. Some examples include treatment of stray animals, trash in the streets, and child labor.

You will likely be confronted with the type of poverty you have never before seen. We want you to keep your eyes open to the reality and think of ways you can make their lives easier. However, we also want you to notice their happiness. People of Guatemala are filled with hope and joy. We could learn a thing or two from them.

INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN AND ANIMALS

It is easy to fall in love with the children you will be meeting in Guatemala. The children will reciprocate your attention with eagerness. One of the biggest contributions you can make to the lives of these children is your kindness, encouragement and attention. Even if you don't speak Spanish, smiles go a long way! And, many of the kids you meet may be eager to practice "English" with you!

Stray dogs are a huge problem in populated parts of Guatemala. While you may be an animal lover and want to interact with them, please maintain a safe distance and do not pet them.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

FUNDRAISING

Many people are often willing to support your participation on a work team. You can invite people to help sponsor you by a personal letter explaining what you are doing, when you are traveling, giving a little bit of information about the Guatemala Service Projects, and explaining what you hope to accomplish on the trip. If you need more specific information, contact Jennifer Demar.

One way we suggest travelers minimize trip fees is through fundraising on Facebook. \$200 of each trip fee goes toward the purchase of a donated item, for example a stove, water filter, bunk bed, food baskets, etc. This portion of the trip is tax deductible. **When you create a public fundraiser on Facebook to benefit Guatemala Service Projects**, the amount that you raise (up to \$200) can be subtracted from your trip fee. This helps you, and us! A link that explains how to do this is: <https://www.facebook.com/fund/GuatemalaServiceProjects/>

Please keep in mind the timing of any fundraising to coordinate with when fees are due. It's never too early!

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

Since your trip fees are paid in advance, you should not need to bring a large amount of money. You may bring small amounts of US cash along for personal expenses and souvenirs if you wish to purchase them. **Local artisans prefer local currency.** It is difficult for them to exchange yet many are willing to accept. The Guatemalan currency is the quetzal, with an exchange rate that varies daily, but is usually around 7.5 quetzales to the dollar. Local currency can be obtained by using a debit or credit card at one of the ATMs which are available. 4-digit PIN's. Change only the money that you think you will want to use, as you will lose money by a less than favorable exchange rate when you change money back from quetzals to dollars. **ALL ATM'S HAVE A DAILY WITHDRAWAL LIMIT of 2000 QUETZALS (approx. \$260 US) per card/account.**

Be sure to notify your bank or credit card company before you travel so that your cards will not be rejected for "out of country" use. VISA is most widely accepted. Some limited acceptance of other cards.

A few of the vendors in the markets, shops, and restaurants will accept Visa. Some will accept US dollars as well, but the exchange rate may be less favorable than at a bank. **US currency should be *very clean* (unmarked), and not torn or overly bent or faded.** Ideally, you should carry *newer* currency. Older currency, or those with tears, writing, etc., will be rejected by the local banks and vendors/service providers. Travelers' and personal checks are **NOT** accepted for purchases in Guatemala.

INSURANCES

Travel and medical insurance are strongly encouraged!!!! Make sure that you have medical insurance that covers you abroad. NOTE: Sometimes you will have the opportunity to buy travel insurance with your flight.

DIRECTED DONATIONS

Sometimes groups or individuals wish to raise money for a special project. Guatemala Service Projects is willing to assist in channeling the funds to one of our specific projects, even if we will not be participating in it on your trip. Please be in contact with us for further information about this process. Guatemala Service Projects can assist you with the purchase of items or distribution of the funds in Guatemala. Guatemala Service Projects can also contact project directors for suggestions for special projects and needs they may have.

TIPPING

During your visit, many are working together to make your stay comfortable. It is customary and gracious for visitors to give a tip to the staff at the end of their time there.

The payment you make for the trip will include tips for baggage handlers, drivers, waitstaff, cleaning staff, hotel staff, and tour guides so there is no need to worry about this separately.

HEALTH INFORMATION

***Please let your health care provider know you are going to Guatemala and follow his/her recommendations regarding immunizations and precautions. Please also complete and return the Health History form.**

FOOD

This is by far the biggest challenge. We all like to experience new foods, and we all need water to survive. Many diseases are easily transmitted by food and water, usually through contamination of the water source or mishandling of food. ***Remember that PREVENTION is the best form of treatment.*** Using the following techniques will significantly decrease your risk.

1. Drink only clean water. (Clean water is water that has been purified in some fashion through ultraviolet light, filtration, boiling, or chemical treatment).
2. Avoid eating fresh or uncooked food from street vendors. (Fried foods should be ok.)
3. Sodas, fruit juices, and water in bottles or cans are safest (avoid fountain drinks).
4. Wash hands carefully before handling food or eating. If water and soap are not available, an alcohol based hand sanitizer is an acceptable alternative.
5. Avoid fresh fruits and raw vegetables (including lettuce) that you have not cleaned yourself (or been prepared by someone you trust).
6. Hot drinks (coffee, teas, etc.) are usually safe because they have been boiled as part of the preparation process.
7. Don't brush your teeth with tap water (and don't sing in the shower).
8. Ice is considered not safe unless you are sure it has been prepared with clean water.
9. Remember, your water bottle can be your worst enemy. It should be cleaned each day and allowed to air dry. Avoid bottles with the pull top/twist top nozzles (they get very dirty and so you contaminate your water when you drink from it). Water bottles that require twisting the cap off to get a drink are safest.
10. Avoid undercooked meat products.

IMMUNIZATIONS

PLEASE CONSULT YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

GENEAL HEALTH MAINTENANCE

When you treat your body well, your risk of infection/illness is much less. Make sure you get enough sleep, keep yourself well hydrated, eat well and safely, use sun block, allow your body to adjust to the higher altitudes before exerting yourself too hard, and take rest breaks when needed. If you need to take any medications regularly, make sure you take them along with you because they may not be available there. Carry hand sanitizer and use it liberally. And don't forget to carry toilet paper—many public restrooms don't have any.

MENTAL HEALTH

If you occasionally or frequently suffer from anxiety, depression or have other mental health issues, please disclose those on the health form. The information is kept private from others in the group, but it helps our organization know how best to support you during your trip and recognize things that might trigger a difficult emotion. If you are an adoptee from Guatemala, facing the *raw* reality of "life in Guatemala" – what you may have lived had you stayed in Guatemala or what your birth family may be experiencing now – can be difficult to process. Please know that there may not be an experienced counselor with our group every day of the trip, but you should feel comfortable in expressing your emotions and we have listening ears. (We also have connections in Guatemala to an English-speaking professional should that be needed.)

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HEALTH ISSUES THAT YOU MAY FACE IN YOUR TRAVELS TO GUATEMALA AN ONLINE SOURCE FOR MORE INFORMATION IS WWW.CDC.GOV/TRAVEL. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE WEBSITE TAKES A VERY PESSIMISTIC LOOK AT TRAVEL (TALKING ABOUT ALL THE THINGS THAT COULD GO WRONG), BUT GIVES THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY. PLEASE CONSULT YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

SAFETY

PERSONAL SAFETY ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Guatemala is a country that has come out of a civil war in recent history and is confronted with significant poverty issues, with the resultant increase in theft, etc., which is seen in many developing countries. We make every attempt possible to keep you safe during your time here by using facilities which we feel are acceptable and avoiding those areas and activities which we feel may be dangerous.

You also can help keep yourself safe by following these guidelines, as you would in any large city in the US:

1. Do not make obvious displays of large amounts of cash or expensive items (jewelry, cameras, electronic devices, etc.)
2. Carry only the things you will need with you on any day of travel.
3. Always walk in groups of two or more.
4. Be aware of the people around you.
5. Watch for the following activities that indicate a robbery plan:
 - a. *Someone jostles you*
 - b. *You are asked for directions*
 - c. *Someone points to something spilled on your clothing*
 - d. *Something is dropped close to you to distract your attention*
6. Bring two copies of your passport with you (notarized as being authentic copies of the original, if possible), and carry one copy, instead of your passport, with you when you travel with the team to the work sites.
7. Keep wallets, pocketbooks, backpacks, etc., in front of you and close to your body.
8. Store money and credit cards in different locations, and carry only what you need.
9. Do not take pictures of children or nationals except with permission.
10. Follow the information given in the *Health Information* section of this manual.
11. For safety reasons, handing out of candy or gifts to any of the villages you may pass through anywhere in Guatemala should be pre-arranged by a member of Guatemala Service Projects. This is done to decrease potential risk to our teams and staff and preserve good relationships within the communities we visit.

WHAT TO BRING

PACKING SUGGESTIONS

The following items are suggested to be included in packing for the trip.

CLOTHING PERSONAL ITEMS/TOILETRIES, MISCELLANEOUS

- Jeans
- Sunscreen
- Notarized Copy of Passport
- T-shirts
- Insect spray with Deet
- Passport
- Work clothes (that can be abused)
- Shampoo/conditioner, toothpaste, deodorant, soap
- Flashlight
- Shorts (no short shorts)
- Anti-diarrheal medications (just in case)
- Camera with memory cards
- Sneakers
- Anti-nausea medication (just in case -- cobblestone streets are bumpy and some village roads are unpaved)
- Backpack
- Rain jacket
- Feminine products (if they pertain)
- Pajamas
- Wet wipes or alcohol based no rinse
- Hand sanitizer
- Reusable Water bottle
- Sandals/flipflops
- Tissues and/or travel packs of toilet paper
- Sunglasses
- Souvenir money
- Ear plugs (they may help block the noise from dogs barking or fireworks shot off in the middle of the night)

ORGANIZATION DONATIONS

Many team members enjoy contributing donations for the service projects where they will be working. The following is a general list of things that are often appreciated and are directly related to the projects being undertaken. Please consult Jennifer Demar for specifics.

- School supplies
- Spanish language books (particularly those geared toward elementary school age)
- Medical supplies (surgical gloves, bandages, gauze pads, oxygen cannulas, diabetes test strips)
- Prenatal vitamins and children's gummy vitamins
- Toothbrushes and dental floss
- Assistive devices (reader glasses, hearing aids, wheelchairs, slings and braces)

PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Schools

- Library and technology lab
- Classroom and administrative office improvements (chalkboards and file cabinets)
- School kitchens and classroom construction
- Recreational and physical fitness equipment

Communities

- Vitamins program
- Stove and water filter donations
- Potable Water projects
- Health Clinics
- 10 Bucks a Cluck

Organizational

- Student sponsorship
- Entrepreneurship Program

CONTACT INFORMATION

Guatemala Service Projects

PO Box 441

Oconomowoc, WI 53066



www.guatasp.org



<https://www.facebook.com/GuatemalaServiceProjects/>



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(262) 468-8445 (Jennifer Demar – while in the United States)



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