



have fun help people.

Giving Guatemala About your Program



“There comes a point in a person’s life when you start asking yourself: what difference am I making in this world? I decided to put my time into something worthwhile.”

- Gayle Harrod

Giving Guatemala

Introduction to Guatemala

Guatemala, officially the Republic of Guatemala, is the northernmost of the Central American nations. It has the grandeur of some of the most majestic ruins on the planet - Tikal - and the wonders of the most diverse flora and fauna of any rainforest. You will find tremendous pride in Mayan culture everywhere you go in Guatemala. Yet its high level of poverty and unstable political past has left a legacy of current challenges.

Guatemala's neighbors are Mexico on the north and west, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador on the east. The country consists of three main regions - the cool highlands with the heaviest population, the tropical area along the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, and the tropical jungle in the northern lowlands (known as the Petén). Guatemala has a rich and distinctive culture from the long mix of elements from Spain and the native Mayan people. This diverse history and the natural beauty of the land have created a destination rich in interesting and scenic sites.



Guatemala was once the site of the impressive ancient Mayan civilization. It was conquered by Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado in 1524 and became a republic in 1839 after the United Provinces of Central America collapsed. From 1898 to 1920, dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera ran the country, and from 1931 to 1944 dictator Jorge Ubico Castañeda served as the strongman. He was forced to resign in response to a wave of protests and a general strike, and from then until the end of a murderous civil war in 1996, Guatemala was subject to a series of coups with massive attendant civil rights abuses. State-sponsored murders of students, human rights activists and the ethnic Mayan people, gained Guatemala a terrible reputation around the world.

Since the peace accords in 1996, Guatemala has witnessed successive democratic elections, most recently in 2011.

Guatemala's abundance of biologically significant and unique ecosystems contributes to its position as a biodiversity hotspot.

Spanish is the official language of Guatemala, and the most commonly spoken. Over twenty indigenous languages are still spoken throughout, but many of the Maya people have at least a working knowledge of basic Spanish as well, except in the more remote areas.

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Community

Flores is in close proximity to Tikal, the most famous Mayan ruins in Guatemala.

Flores is the airport that volunteers will fly in, located in Petén, Guatemala. The town proper is an island on Lago Petén Itzá, connected to land by causeway, on the other side of which lie the twin towns of Santa Elena and San Benito. All three are often referred to as Flores.



El Remate is the name of the smaller community in which the program is located. All the locals will enjoy telling you about their experience when the television program Survivor was filmed here a number of years ago!

Flores is in close proximity to Tikal, the most famous Mayan ruins in Guatemala. The city is dense with colonial, red-roofed buildings, narrow cobblestone streets, a historic church and Spanish plaza, and restaurants that are easy to stumble upon walking the city's charming streets.

Walking is the most common way locals get around El Remate. You can take a tuk-tuk style taxi almost anywhere for less than \$4.

Projects and Expectations

Globe Aware engages volunteers in several different work projects targeted at helping those who are impoverished. Most Guatemalans in the area do not finish school beyond the sixth grade. There are 7th grade facilities in other towns, but over time the pattern that developed was that girls who were allowed to travel to those villages often came back pregnant and weren't allowed to finish school; hence families do not allow their girls in particular to attend. Even at lower grades there are no truancy prevention measures in place.



Because of the high level of poverty, many families live in quickly made shelters directly on earth floors. The high humidity and low sanitation levels combine for a high level of fungus related health and respiratory issues.

Volunteers will almost always be engaged in the building of a cement floor for a family, which can take up to two days. The remaining project work is divided between the other projects listed below, and can often be changed (upon arrival) after

discussions with the on-site coordinator. Do not hesitate to communicate whether you feel you are doing too much or too little work, our coordinators do their very best to meet the varying abilities of our volunteers.

Possible projects include:



1. Installing cement floors in the homes of impoverished people. This is an important project because homes which have dirt floors are not easily cleaned or sanitized, and hence the inhabitants are affected by harmful parasites and diseases. The owners of the house help install these floors alongside the volunteers. You will see how the children otherwise have no clean place to crawl and learn to walk. This is by far the most popular activity because of the family interaction. No heavy tools or equipment are used; volunteers will be using shovels and wheelbarrows under the supervision of the coordinator.

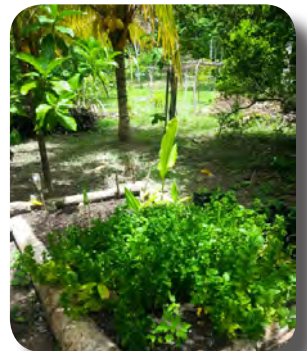


2. Working with students at a local community library, the only library around for miles. There is also a computer lab here, put together by volunteers.

3. Teaching a class for children in grades 7th, 8th and 9th at a facility that provides education for those who are unable to afford the materials to attend public school. Although Guatemala has a school system that allows children to attend free of charge, there are extra costs for books, uniforms, transportation and food, which many cannot afford. Working with children includes teaching English

pronunciation and colloquialisms, artwork, music, games, reading, crafts, clean up, playtime and group sports.

4. Work with the local women's group in setting up home by home gardening projects. The local culture is conditioned to eating a high-carb diet, and this system allows for the introduction of healthy greens.



5. Jungle Conservation Project. Many fields in the area had been used for corn, which for a variety of reasons is considered a low value crop. The challenge and limitation is that while corn is heavy in carbs and sugar, it is only usable as a crop for two years. Replacing old corn fields with a variety of edible plants and fruits that last much longer results in a broader spectrum of nutrition, and much longer lasting plants, less work to maintain. On this project, volunteers will help in planting and harvesting, teaching local village kids the same. You will see that all electricity is solar,

fish in the local tilapia tanks are fed with natural sources like termite nests, rain water is harnessed for multiple purposes, and you will even learn about the incredible Mayan tradition of storing water via aguadas: Look for the many circular-looking ponds in the earth as you fly into Flores!

6. Help with local clinic in distribution of diabetes health-care items.



Leisure Activities



Volunteers will have the wonderful opportunity to visit the world-famous Tikal National Park and Temple, though the park entrance is at additional cost to the volunteer and is paid upon arrival to the park directly to park officials. The Tikal excursion including transport and entrance fees only (non-guided) is \$40 per person. A guided excursion including transport, entrance fees and guide is \$50 per person.

Other optional leisure activities include:

- Tortilla making class
- Horseback riding
- Studying the butterflies at the butterfly reserve
- Taking an herb walk in the jungle
- Meeting with an herbalist
- Swimming, kayaking and water play in the lake



Optional excursions, independent of your Globe Aware program, include the following activities. Please let us know which ones you are interested in so that your coordinator may arrange for you., or you can discuss with your coordinator on arrival.

Please remember that in countries where resources are not abundant, that sometimes animals (horses, or those at the zoo) may not be fed or cared for as well as you may be accustomed. Also note that Globe Aware does not run or promote tourist activities such as ziplining, but we know many of our volunteers are interested in such activities. Because of this, we have included prices for local activities like this so that volunteers will be prepared for what things cost. Volunteers have told us that the equipment in Guatemala does not seem as sturdy as that used in other countries and that some safety features, such as the use of helmets, is very lax. The decision to engage in any of these activities is entirely on your own.

Don't miss the opportunity to visit the world-famous Tikal ruins!

Canopy (zipline) Tour Package \$30 per person
(Round Transportation to Canopy, Entry Fee)

Flores Package: \$55 per person
(Petencito Zoo + Boat tour + Conial historic town of Flores + Round Trip Transportation)

Biotopo Cerro Cahui Hike \$15per person
Horseback Riding \$30 per person

Additional Packing Information



Our program location is very humid and often muddy. Pack light **very casual** and quick drying clothes. Your work clothes may be ruined with paint, cement, or mud. You may want hiking boots or comfortable and sturdy work shoes. Expect narrow, muddy and uneven trails and bring appropriate footwear. You might consider bringing rubber rain boots for the mud if you come in the rainy season. We recommend bringing work gloves that may get dirty, a few snacks and Ziploc bags. Strong insect repellent is essential. Make sure to pack enough clothes to be comfortable, considering sweat, mud, paint, etc. Make sure to pack enough clothes to be

comfortable, considering that you may get dirty doing volunteer work. You should not need to do laundry on a weeklong trip but if necessary laundry services are available on site for a fee.

Please note that the packing list is meant as a guideline. There is no single item that you can't live without for one week. Pack what you think you will need to be comfortable, but do not get preoccupied about items that you didn't bring, weren't on the list, etc. Everyone has different opinions about essential items!

- Sunscreen
- Sun hat
- Pants for working and relaxing
- Towel
- Toilet paper / tissues or wipes
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Flashlight
- Toiletries and any prescription medication needed
- T-shirts
- Umbrella or rain poncho
- Socks and plenty of underwear
- Day pack / Small backpack
- Strong money belt
- Camera / memory cards / chargers
- Money / credit cards for personal expenditures
- Lip balm
- Travel charger

You may enjoy bringing games or books for free time.

Blankets or a sleeping bag may help you be more comfortable, as the bedding may not be what you are accustomed to. It is also a great donation to leave behind at the end of the program.

Gifts / Donations

At the end of your stay, you might feel inclined to give something to community hosts who have been particularly helpful or courteous. In the past, volunteers have given an empty journal decorated with a child's name, or written them a thank you note, sung them a song, etc. People also enjoy seeing simple tokens from home, such as postcards of your hometown, or photos of your family.

Please be aware that bringing donations can also be awkward. In some instances, receiving donations can effect the recipients' pride negatively. This is not always the case. Do try and consider when donating used clothes, particularly those used during the program, if you feel the local community members would actually want them. It is best to discuss donations with the coordinator for these reasons.

There are cases that donations are more readily accepted, however there are often still local cultural nuances that can make the act of giving complicated. In order to preserve pride, please discuss how your donations can be presented with the coordinator. **Please note you are not expected to bring anything.**

Should you decide you **do** want to bring donations, you may consider: toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, linens, kitchen utensils, flashlights with batteries, children's books in SPANISH for the library are especially appreciated, clothing - shoes, flip flops for kids, underwear, t-shirts, socks, soccer shoes are always welcome - , any and all soccer items like cleats, soccer socks, shinguards and balls, as well as school supplies like ballpoint pens, pencils, notebooks, construction paper, drawing paper, and educational toys or toys that do not require batteries - toy cars, UNO, Connect Four, board games, cards, Jenga, Rummikub, dolls, building toys, sandbox toys, dominoes, jump ropes, balls - of any kind especially soccer. If possible used laptops are always a great donation and computer speakers are badly needed. You may also want to leave behind the items you used during the week - clothes, towels, linens if you brought them.

We discourage cash donations and distributing money in all of our communities.

We discourage giving any more money than you are already giving to the program and community via your program fee. Globe Aware funds are spent on program expenses, as opposed to giving cash donations -- this helps ensure that the money is being spent in meaningful ways. We understand the good intentions of our volunteers. Giving cash out to community members contradicts the goal of promoting sustainability, promotes expectations that foreigners are 'made of money' and can create an atmosphere that begging may solve a community's challenges.

However, if you feel like giving a gratuity to your coordinator this will be very appreciated though not necessary.

Special Donations

Please contact our office if you would like to bring special donations - Globe Aware has received a grant to go towards medical supplies and our office can have those shipped directly to you (at no cost). These supplies are vital to the local clinic and will be greatly appreciated. This is by far the greatest need in the community and will cost you nothing to bring.



Globe Aware has also recently begun a trial project of distributing reading glasses and sunglasses via our volunteers. Reading glasses are extremely helpful and can help people see, read and work again.

Fitting readers is easy to do, no experience is needed. It is fast, efficient and effective. If you are interested in bringing reading glasses to distribute as donations during your stay in Guatemala, please contact our office so that we may send some to you (at no extra cost to you). The glasses will be shipped directly to you for you to bring to the program in your bag.

It is important for you to let us know if you plan on bringing reading glasses so our coordinator may schedule time for distribution. Please ask our offices before purchasing as it may not be a current need in the community.

Because of the nature of our frequent contributions to the community, it has come to our attention that occasionally locals, even staff, will solicit personal contact information to solicit donations after your return home.

We strongly discourage giving personal contact information/social media for this reason. When given outside the context of a US based nonprofit, there is no accountability needed or required on the end of the recipient, nor is there any special tax deduction for your donation. We are eager to keep you abreast of goings on with this project, which we post on our facebook page and in newsletters and are happy to keep in contact with you through our official channels and our home office.

Accommodations



Lodging is provided in a small, rustic but very quaint hotel situated on the shores of the quiet lake (no motor boats allowed!), accommodating two guests per room. A single room may be arranged but is limited to availability. All beds are covered with mosquito netting, and include a private bath with a hot shower, flushing toilets, fans, and an outdoor patio area. You are provided with one towel and simple linens. There is also a small no frills lock box in each room for valuables. Mosquito nets are provided.



The hotel is located on Lake Petén Itzá within a biological rain forest reserve. Because of this, everything flourishes here, including bugs. Expect that at least on an occasional basis, you will see a daddy long-leg, or ants, etc. You will hear the miraculous howler monkeys at times from your rooms. There are quite a few pleasant communal relaxation areas, such as the dock - look out for the naturally glowing organisms in the lake at night! During the dry season, butterflies are literally everywhere. If you see something amiss (a door is jammed or a fan doesn't work, PLEASE notify the coordinator who will ensure it gets fixed.



For those who feel they need air-conditioning, a supplement of **\$240 per person** for the week will provide a room with A/C, television, bathtub and outdoor suite area. The beds are much nicer, it is 3 times as large as the regular room, well insulated for privacy (and fewer bugs), with a large screen TV with cable, a huge patio with a 2 person jacuzzi as well as a jacuzzi bathtub inside with double showers. **If you would like to upgrade please make sure you notify our offices ahead of time as doing it on site is more complicated due to payment method constraints.** If you feel that there might be a possibility of upgrading on site please bring

CASH and note that this will be subject to availability.

Our coordinator lives in her home a couple of miles away from the hotel where volunteers are housed. Alfonso is usually the person stationed at the hotel full time and he does speak some English. If you have any needs that he is not understanding, he has been instructed to call Anne, our coordinator, on his cell phone. Please let Anne know if this system is not working for any reason.



Electricity

There is limited electricity: enough to recharge digital batteries, but not enough to do heavy-duty hair drying. Voltage is the same as in North America, 110V. Electrical outlets take the same plug as in North America, so a prong adaptor is not necessary.



Food

Breakfast and dinners will be served at the hotel, they are delicious and very generous meals.



Other meals will be taken at local restaurants and several special meals will be prepared by the families for whom volunteers will install floors. Sample meal items include chicken tamales with black bean salad, fresh local whitefish with chicken and vegetarian alternatives, rice, beans, and fresh fruit. All meals have the option of meat, vegetarian or vegan. Bottled water is provided.



Weather

Our program site is located in El Remate, which is normally tropical very warm weather, and humid year round. March to May is the hottest, driest season, and the wet season begins in late May or early June. October and November are cooler. The high seasons for Guatemala tourism are December to April and July and August. Daytime temperatures are often in the high 80s to low 90s year round, nighttime temperatures are usually in the 70s. The rainy season does not mean rain all day long, usually there is clear sunshine in the morning with an afternoon rain shower of 1-2 hours.



Money



The local currency is the Quetzal (plural: quetzales), named after the national bird, which has ancient and mythic connotations. US dollars are widely accepted and can be exchanged in most small towns. ATMs can be found on most major towns, but there are only a couple in El Remate. Although dollars and Euros are accepted, you might not get a good exchange rate so it's better to have some quetzales with you. Our coordinator can help you exchange money from dollars to quetzales very easily. Credit cards are accepted only in some places, but be sure to notify your bank that you will be traveling, and make sure to ask them not to flag the cards. Sometimes even after you have notified the bank, they might stop payment on some transactions, which can be extremely frustrating.

It is important to point out that excursions are all payable in cash ONLY and that if you decide to upgrade your hotel, the accepted payment method is cash.

Phone and Internet

Please do not plan to spend a lot of time on the phone or internet during your short volunteer week. You may make calls and check email during your free time, though you may find it is not all that convenient.

Many US phones will work in Guatemala, though roaming charges can be extremely expensive. Be sure to check with your cell phone provider before you leave so that you can arrange for data, cell and text while traveling and depending on your plan, you may need to pay for the entire billing cycle. The safest way to avoid a high cell phone bill when you return is to turn your cell phone off or use only on Wi-Fi where available.

Wi-Fi is available at the common area of the hotel where we stay as well as at the library. However, service can be spotty so it might be more feasible to not count on regular internet access. It does have a low download limit and you should not count on using it for facetime or streaming - even uploading and downloading photos may be hard.



There is also a small internet cafe about 2 miles from the volunteer accommodations. Make sure you ask your coordinator about transportation before you are dropped off so she can make arrangements if needed.

It is more feasible to not count on regular internet access. Your coordinator has a cell phone where your family or friends can reach you in case of emergency. Also, if you find yourself needing help in the middle of the night, the on-call manager at the hotel has a cell phone that can be used for emergencies as well.

The coordinator also has a USB to-go stick on her laptop for quick access to the internet. ***In Emergencies***, feel free to ask her about this. Please note that it is for her personal computer and be sensitive in the amount of time borrowing it.

Health

You should be up to date on routine vaccinations while traveling to any destination. No special vaccines are required to travel to Guatemala.

For additional information on travel health in Guatemala, please refer to the CDC's website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guatemala>

Please be aware that dengue fever, a mosquito-borne illness, is present throughout tropical Central America. It is essential to use mosquito repellent with at least 20% DEET at all times. There have also been cases of chikungunya in the area, which is also transmitted by mosquito bites. There have been no new cases since September 2015, but we continue to recommend use of mosquito repellent with at least 20% DEET at all times. For more information please consult your health professional or see what the CDC has to say : <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/>

Your Fellow Volunteers

You will receive a Fellow Volunteer Report attached to our "Ready, Set, Go!" email about 3 weeks before the program starts. It will include information on your fellow travelers, as well as their email so that you can start to get acquainted with them before you leave.

Your Host and Coordinator: Anne



Anne, her 10-year old son and the family dog set out from Calgary, Canada in 1994 seeking to fulfill a lifelong dream of a home with palm trees and thatched huts. Their journey eventually led to the Mayan jungles of Petén, Guatemala, where she began many humanitarian assistance projects and programs, including a free medical clinic, the coordination of visiting international medical and dental professionals, a computerized library and a Women's Center. Anne has spent years as a hotel manager in the heart of a Mayan wildlife preserve. Anne is also the lead organizer for the annual gathering known as Unificación Maya, and the author of numerous electronic publications describing life in the jungle. She is bilingual in English and Spanish. Make

sure you ask her to meet her pet, Tiny Dancer! Fair warning, though: the name is deceptive.

Arrival and Meet-Up

Mundo Maya International Airport is just outside Flores and is the only other international airport in the country aside from Guatemala City.

There are two daily flights to and from Guatemala City, – one in the morning and one in the evening. Guatemala City is a huge, modern airport. The way most flights are set up will unfortunately often involve an overnight connection in Guatemala City, but we can recommend safe, nearby spots to stay for the night. Depending on where you are coming from, you may be able to arrive with enough time to make the connecting flight into Flores in the afternoon but note the program will begin on Saturday morning, so you will have to pay for the extra night in Flores or the program accommodations. This might be the more expensive option.

You should also check the option of flying through Belize City. Most flights from North America arrive early enough to connect with the TropicAir flight into Flores that departs about 4 pm from Belize City. Again, the program begins on Saturday morning, so you should plan to travel on Friday if you are taking this route, and make arrangements for the night before.

Another option will be to fly into Belize City and arrange ground transport (about \$300 per group) into the village. Our office can arrange this for you. This may be the most inexpensive option and worth exploring, though you might want to fly in the day before as it will take about 5 hours to get from Belize City to El Remate.

If your connection allows and you decide you'd prefer to fly into Flores the day before the program begins, there are several options. You can take a taxi from the airport into Flores which is very inexpensive, and a 5-10 minute ride and there are many hotel options in Flores to fit every budget. Our coordinator can pick you up the next morning before meeting the rest of the volunteers at the airport, or you can take a taxi back to the airport to meet up with everyone there. Alternatively, if you would like to stay in the program accommodations, we can arrange for a driver to pick you up. The cost for the extra night is \$35 per person (regular room) or \$70 per person (A/C room). That rate does include dinner on arrival. The pick up fee is \$30 per group.

If we do not see the volunteer at the meet up, we call our head offices, who in turn call your emergency contact to see if they have any updated information on any change in travel plans.

Volunteers arriving on Saturday morning will meet at the Flores Airport exit. It is a very small airport and you should not have trouble locating your coordinator. Our coordinator will meet the flight that arrives at 8:30 a.m. on the Saturday your program starts.

Entering and Leaving Guatemala

A valid passport is required to visit Guatemala. **It is VERY important that you go through customs and immigration on your first point of entry into Guatemala, which will usually be in Guatemala City. Even if you are directed to your connecting gate at the airport, you NEED to go through customs and immigrations before proceeding.**

A passport is required to visit Guatemala, and you may need a visa depending on your citizenship

Citizens of the following countries do not need a visa to enter Guatemala:

Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Chile, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, San Marino, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vatican City, Venezuela.



A valid U.S. passport is required for all U.S. citizens to enter Guatemala and to depart Guatemala for return to the United States, regardless of age. Even if dual nationals are permitted to enter Guatemala on a second nationality passport, U.S. citizens returning to the United States from Guatemala are not allowed to board their flights without a valid U.S. passport. Certificates of Naturalization, birth certificates, driver's licenses, and photocopies are not accepted by Guatemalan authorities as alternative travel documents. While in Guatemala, U.S. citizens should carry a photocopy of their

passports with them at all times due to the high rate of passport theft and leave the original passport in a safe place. Visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (Spanish only) for the most current visa information.

An exit tax must be paid when departing Guatemala by air. The exit tax (currently \$30) is generally included in an airline ticket price, but may be charged separately. There is an additional airport security fee (currently 20 quetzals, or approximately \$2.60) that all travelers must pay at the airport.

Minors under 18 years old traveling with a valid U.S. passport do not need special permission from their parents to enter or leave Guatemala. U.S. citizens do not need a visa for a stay of 90 days or less. That period can be extended for an additional 90 days upon application to Guatemalan immigration. (If the initial period of stay granted upon entry is less than 90 days, any extension would be granted only for the same number of days as the initial authorization.) There is a daily fine of 10 quetzals for each day that a traveler overstays his/her permission to be in Guatemala, which must be paid directly to the Guatemalan Immigration Agency. (U.S. citizens born in Guatemala are currently exempted from this fine.)

In June 2006, Guatemala entered a “Central America-4 (CA-4) Border Control Agreement” with El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Under the terms of the agreement, citizens of the four countries may travel freely across land borders from one of the countries to any of the others without completing entry and exit formalities at immigration checkpoints. U.S. citizens and other eligible foreign nationals who legally enter any of the four countries may similarly travel among the four without obtaining additional visas or tourist entry permits for the other three countries. Immigration officials at the first port of entry determine the length of stay, up to a maximum period of 90 days. Foreign tourists who wish to remain in the region beyond the period initially granted for their visit are required either to request a one-time extension of stay from local immigration authorities in the country where the traveler is physically present, or to travel outside the CA-4 countries and reapply for admission to the region. Foreigners “expelled” from any of the four countries are excluded from the entire CA-4 region. In isolated cases, the lack of clarity in the implementation of the CA-4 Border Control Agreement has caused temporary inconvenience to travelers. U.S. citizens who are also citizens of another country and who choose to travel within the CA-4 region using their non-U.S. passport should consult in advance with the appropriate regional authorities regarding visa requirements within the CA-4 zone.

A U.S. citizen whose passport is lost or stolen in Guatemala must obtain a new passport at the U.S. Embassy as soon as possible and present it, together with a police report on the loss or theft, to the Guatemalan Immigration Agency (Dirección de Migración), Sub-Director for Migratory Control (Sub-director de Control Migratorio) in order to obtain permission to depart Guatemala. The agency is located in Guatemala City at 6a Avenida 3-11, Zone 4. Office hours are weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; the telephone number is 2411-2411. No fee is charged by Guatemalan immigration for this service.

For further information regarding entry, exit and customs requirements, travelers should contact the Guatemalan Embassy at 2220 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone (202) 745-4953, extension 102; fax (202) 745-1908; Visit their website ; or contact the nearest Guatemalan consulate (Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Providence, Phoenix or San Francisco).

Safety and Security

Flores is a quiet and peaceful place, and probably one of the safest places in the sometimes wild north. Santa Elena and San Benito require a little more caution, but offer a more authentic experience of a Guatemalan town, complete with traffic, litter and street food. Travelers should be vigilant when in major cities or tourist areas such as at Tikal and Guatemala City, due to occasional petty theft. However, incidences of violent crime in Flores are rare.

Do be vigilant of your belongings at all times as petty theft has been an issue at this location outside of our accommodations.

Never take photos of children without permission. Some Guatemalans are extremely wary of this and will assume you are a kidnapper (even if the children are someone else's). Guatemala has had many problems with children being sold or kidnapped and put up for adoption on the black market. Of course, this doesn't include a few children mixed in with many adults at a distance. This occurs mainly on the more remote Guatemalan villages. In the major cities people are somewhat more open towards picture-taking, but still avoid it.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program is a free service provided by the U.S. government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency, keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements, and help your friends and family get in touch with you in case of an emergency. The link to STEP is <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

Global Entry

Global Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Due to sequestration, long lines have been reported at customs and immigration when coming back into the United States. Global Entry approved travelers are able to use the automated kiosks at immigration to reduce wait times considerably. For more information, visit <http://www.globalentry.gov/>

In Case of Emergency

Embassy of the United States in Guatemala

Avenida Reforma 7-01, Zona 10, Guatemala Ciudad, Guatemala

Telephone: (502)2326-4000 during embassy business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mo-Thu and 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Fridays).

Emergency after-hours telephone: (502)2331-2354

Facsimile: (502)2331-3804

Internet website: <http://guatemala.usembassy.gov>

Other emergency numbers:

- Police (911 equivalent): 110 or 120
- Tourist emergency assistance: 502 2421-2810
- Tourist Police (POLITUR): 1 500
- Fire Department: 122 or 123

Further Readings While no further reading is required, we think it is always nice to have a travel guide book with you to read about the area. Lonely Planet, Frommer's, Budget Travel, Rough Guides are some of the titles we have recommended in the past. Many people also enjoy reading about the Mayan Calendar and Astrological beliefs (one popular title is "The Book of Destiny" by Carlos Barrios).