



VISITOR INFORMATION GUIDE

WELCOME TO GUATEMALA



Plan International Guatemala staff welcome you to Guatemala!

Plan started working in the country in 1978.

The Republic of Guatemala is located in the northwest border of Central America, with a broad indigenous culture of Mayan heritage plus the Spanish influence dating from the Colony .

Guatemala has a wide variety of climates because of its mountainous terrain that ranges from sea level up to 4,220 meters above sea level. This causes the great variety of ecosystems in the country ranging from the mangrove wetlands of the Pacific to the cloud forests of high mountains.

It borders to the west and north with Mexico; to the east with Belize and the Gulf of Honduras; with El Salvador to the south, and southeast with the Pacific Ocean. The country has an area of 108,889 km².

Its capital is Guatemala City. Its indigenous population consists of 40% of the total population. Spanish is the official language, and the country has 24 Mayan languages, plus the Xinca and Garifuna languages; the Garifuna language is spoken by the African descendant population in the Caribbean province of Izabal.

WEATHER:

Although located in the tropics, Guatemala's climate is as varied as its geography. The climate is tropical in the low coastal areas and temperate in the Highlands.

The rainy season is from May to October, the dry season from November to April.



National and public holidays in the country. During these days administrative and banking services, among others, may not be available. Listed below are the major holidays in Guatemala:

January 1: New Year's day

March/April: Easter

May 1: Labor Day

June 30: Army Day

August 15: Assumption Virgin Day

September 15: Independence Day

October 20: Revolution Day

November 1: All Saint's Day

December 24/ 25: Christmas

December 31: New Year's Eve

GOVERNMENT:

The government is republican, democratic, and representative, and is divided in three branches: the Executive, presided over by the president and vice president who are democratically elected for a period of four years with a council of 13 ministries; the Legislative, represented by 153 deputies elected for a period of four years; and the Judicial, presided over by the Supreme Court whose justices are elected by the Congress of the Republic for a period of five years. Each of the 22 departments is governed by a governor and the 338 municipalities by a mayor.

ECONOMY:

The principle sources of income stem from employment outside the country tourism, agriculture and agro exports – coffee, sugar, cotton, fruits and vegetables.

RELIGION

Religion in Guatemala is fairly complex, with traditional Mayan spirituality still very much a presence, particularly in the highlands, along with Catholicism and the more recent incursions of Evangelical Christianity.

The country is vulnerable to natural (volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and hurricanes) as well as human (deforestation, severe water contamination) disasters.

REQUIRED CLOTHING

The warmest months are April and May with temperatures up to 40 degrees Centigrade in the low coastal areas. Light clothes are recommended during the day and a coat of a sweater for the night.

The coldest months are November, December and January with temperatures as low as 5 degrees Centigrade during the night. A sweater and a jacket are recommended.

Safety recommendations

In recent years, the violence in Guatemala, and particularly in the city, has increased. Here are some simple tips you should take into account when traveling to Guatemala:

- Upon arrival it is preferable to request a hotel shuttle service. This can often be done in advance when making hotel reservations. If there is no service available then you should call "taxis

amarillos" (yellow cabs) phone: 2332 1515 upon leaving immigration at the airport. This is the most reliable taxi service in the capital.

- Be very careful at all times of your personal security and that of your belongings: keep cameras inside a bag, take off jewelry, watches, when outside your hotel and keep money and credit cards in a safe place.
- Visitors should never walk at night on the streets (especially women).
- Be careful in crowded places and buses for pickpockets and purse or jewel snatchers.
- Avoid traveling by bus or taxi after dark (6 p.m.) or downtown or off main roads. At any time, seek advice from the hotel staff where you are staying. Avoid showing your wallet; be cautious.
- Avoid the use of your mobile phone in public spaces, and do not leave it charging in your bedroom.
- Be careful when changing money with a stranger in the street.
- If you walk down the street, it is better to be accompanied by another person, and walk through busy streets.
- Do not carry important documents with you (passport, airline ticket, etc.), computers and other technology.
- If taking a taxi be sure that is a reliable cab company recommended by Plan's personnel, or a taxi from your hotel.
- Do not resist a robbery; doing so is when victims are injured most of the time.

ATM/ Card Skimming: Use ATMs located inside malls and hotels. In some hotels you may find leaflets issued by Asistur (Tourist Police) which give information on which ATMs have repeated problems of the theft of card information, which is then used to drain your account. Do not use ATMs or credit /debit cards in places where thieves are capable of altering ATMs.



Travel information

There are restrictions on the contents of your carry-on luggage such as certain size containers with liquids, aerosols and gels, plus certain items such as scissors and the like, which are applied to passengers traveling on international flights.

A passport to travel to Guatemala is required. Usually no visa or tourist card is required, but travelers are urged to seek information on the visa requirements before traveling.

We do recommend carrying a photocopy of your passport with the date of entry in Guatemala and visa (if required) at all times, in addition to copies of other documents deemed

The Guatemalan currency is the Quetzal. The exchange rate at present is approximately 7.65 Quetzales for 1 US\$.

- Money and traveler's checks can be changed at the airport, in most banks of the city and in the hotels.
- Bring US dollars, cash or traveler's checks only, not other currencies.
- Common credit cards can be used in the big hotels, restaurants, shops and commercial establishments.

Health services



MEDICAL AND HEALTH INFORMATION

The private medical system is adequate in Guatemala city; medical staff can usually speak English. Costs are as high as in North America, but private medical services are reliable and modern.

We recommend each traveler to purchase an appropriate medical insurance. Malaria is a risk in some rural areas at some times of the year.

FOOD AND WATER

Guatemalan typical food includes rice, black beans and tortillas (bread made by corn), home chicken soup, beef and turkey soups. A variety of vegetables are available, some times it depends on the season: beets, potatoes, carrots, broccoli, onions, cabbage and tropical fruits: banana, pine apple, papaya, mango, strawberry, watermelon, etc.

Buy bottled water, do not drink from any other source.

Wash all vegetables in a chlorine solution, peel fruits, and avoid uncooked food.

Emergency numbers

Call one of this numbers from a local phone:

Police 110 | 120
Firefighter 122 | 123
Red Cross 125

No prefixes are needed when calling an emergency telephone number

For general information, tourism, history and places of interest visit:

www.visitguatemala.com



Visiting your Sponsored Child



Highlights For security and privacy reasons Plan International Guatemala point two important issues: During the visit to the community the Sponsor will always be accompanied by a member of Plan staff. Sponsors are not allowed to take the child/siblings/friends out of the community.

The visits take one day, and includes:

- Introductory talk at the area program office.
- Accompanied travel to the community and de sponsored child at home. Plan will provide transportation from the Program Unit office to the community.
- Return to the sponsor's hotel (before 5 pm for safety reasons)

What to bring for the family?

- Sponsors may give gifts to affiliated children and/or their siblings or food for the family.
- Generally many neighbors will join the celebration so it will have more boys and girls than expected.
- We recommend educational and creative gifts as books coloring and crayons avoiding hazards such as scissors objects.

What to avoid?

- The protection policy strongly recommend not to exchange cards or letters containing the address of the sponsor.
- Cash or too expensive gifts may cause discomfort and conflicts with other families in the community.
- For a local family, a sponsor visit is a huge event. They will prepare several days in advance. The family will appreciate not to make changes on stablished dates unless is necessary.
- The tradition in communities is to provide food to the visitors. This meal will include basic foods such as rice, beans, corn tortillas, chicken soup, or similar.
- People will appreciate you to share with them what they serve. If you have a setback, allergy, or any food ban, let know from the beginning, this will avoid misunderstandings or offending.
- It is not recommended to smoke in the house, especially when children are present.
- If you want to take pictures we recommend you to ask for permission before doing so.
- In families in the rural area of Guatemala, the elders have a special respect. Arriving to visit your sponsored child, greet the elders in the family especially.
- If you get invited to get to know the community, always do it accompanied by a member of the family.
- Discover your head when entering religious temples or churches.
- Wear comfortable walking in the countryside, according to the season in which it travels. Use repellent creams and sunscreens.
- Plan staff will accompany you during your visit. Feel free to ask them information and advises on community/cultural issues.



Commitment to child protection

Plan is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children's rights to protection are fully realized.

We take seriously our responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we will take positive action to prevent child abusers from becoming involved with Plan in any way and take stringent measures against any Plan Staff and/or Associate who abuses a child.

Our decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of 'the best interests of the child'.

We are committed to ensuring that our Staff and representatives apply high standards of behavior towards children within both: Their professional and their private lives.

Plan Staff, Associates and Visitors must:

Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.

Report any child abuse and protection concerns they have in accordance with applicable local office procedures.

Disclose information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public without explicit consent from Plan.

Always ask permission from children (or, in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before taking images (e.g. photographs, videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Ensure that any images taken of children are respectful.

Be aware that Plan will take appropriate legal or other action against Plan Associates and Visitors who make false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

Recommended Hospitals

CIUDAD	NOMBRE CLINICA	DIRECCION	TELEFONO
Ciudad de Guatemala	Sanatorio Nuestra Señora del Pilar	3ra. calle 10-71 zona 15, Colonia Tecun Uman	2420-0000
	Hospital Centro Medico	6ª. Avenida 3-47 zona 10	2279-4949
	Hospital Herrera Llerandi	6ª. Avenida 8-71 zona 10	2384-5959
PU Jalapa	Centro Médico Millenium	Calzada Justo Rufino Barrios zona 7	7922-0607
	Sanatorio Santa Marta	1ª. Avenida 0-74 zona 6, Barrio Chipilapa	7922-8175
	Centro Médico Jalapaneco	3ra. Avenida 1-42 zona 1, Barrio La Esperanza	7922-4689
PU Gualán	Sanatorio Santa Ana	Barrio Porvenir, Guastatoya, El Progreso	7945-1345 7945-0917
	Centro Médico Nueva Concepción	1a. Avenida 12-40 Zona 1, Zacapa	7941-3944 7941-4627
	Centro Medico Bethesda	Barrio las Flores, Gualan, Zacapa	7933-0803 4038-6977
	Centro Medico Bethesda	Calle de atrás, Morales, Izabal	7947-6604 7947-6381
	Hospital del Carmen	Km. 292, ruta al Atlántico, Puerto Barrios, Izabal	7948-5518 7948-5517
PU Carcha	Policlínica Galeno	3ra. Avenida 1-47 zona 3. Cobán, Alta Verapaz	7951-2913
	Hospital Nuestra Señora del Carmen	6ta. Calle 4-49 zona 11. Cobán, Alta Verapaz.	7951-0769
	Sanatorio de Especialidades Verapaz	2da. Calle 2-20 zona 4. Cobán Alta Verapaz.	7951-4616 7951-1712
	Hospital Privado Maria de Nazareth	2da. Calle 7-22 zona 1, Cobán, Alta Verapaz.	7951-3270
PU Polochic	Ver clínicas de UP Carcha	Ver clínicas de UP Carcha	-----
PU Salamá y Rabinal	Clínica Medica y Sanatorio Cristiano Adonai	7a. Avenida "A" 3-68 zona 2 Barrio San José, Salamá Baja Verapaz.	7959-3143 5801-6433 5205-9279
	Hospital Privado El Valle	7a. Calle 3-72 zona 2 Barrio San José, Salamá Baja Verapaz.	7940-0403 7940-1545
	Sanatorio Lourdes	3ra. Calle 6-97 zona 1 Barrio El Centro, Salamá Baja Verapaz.	7940-0653
	Centro Medio de Especialidades y Hospital de Día	7a. Calle 3-72 zona 2 Barrio San José, Salamá Baja Verapaz.	7940-2041 7940-0173

RECOMMENDED HOTELS

PROGRAM UNIT	DISTANCE	TRANSPORT	RECOMMENDED HOTELS
GUALAN	4 horas, 200 Kms	Transportes LITEGUA,S.A. 15 calle 10-40 zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala	Hotel Miravallé , Bo. Las Flores Gualán, Zacapa Telefono: (502) 79331917
JALAPA	2 horas 15 min., 95 Kms	Transportes Unidos Jalapanecos, Terminal Centra Norte Km. 8.5 carretera al Atlantico Zona 17, Ciudad Guatemala.	Hotel Puente Viejo, 4a. Calle 0-41 Zona 5, Barrio Chipilapa, Jalapa. Telefono: (502) 7922-3782
BV (Rabinal, Salama)	3.5 horas, 176 Kms	Transportes Cubulera, Direccion Centra Norte, Km. 8.5 carretera al Atlantico, Zona 17, Ciudad Guatemala	Hotel Tzalamhá, Adress: Kilómetro 146, Aldea Los Limones, San Jeronimo, Baja Verapaz, Telefono: (502) 78230603 y 42148808 Email: hoteltzalamha@hotmail.com
CARCHA	4 horas, 210 Kms	Transportes Monja Blanca, 8ª. Avenida 15-16 Zona 1, Ciudad Guatemala	Hotel Posada Don Antonio, 5a. Ave. 1-51 Zona 4 Coban, A. V. Telefono (502) 7951-4287
POLOCHIC	7 horas, 249 Kms.	Transportes Monja Blanca, 8ª. Avenida 15-16 Zona 1, Ciudad Guatemala	Hotel Rubel Nahuq, Calle la Linea Teleman. Telefono: (502) 51520325 and (502) 58005877. Email: rubelnahuq@gmail.com