



DE LA GENTE, OR "FROM THE PEOPLE" GENERATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
GREAT COFFEE DIRECT FROM FARMERS
CULTURAL EXCHANGE TOURS **CHANGING LIVES**

SERVICE LEARNING TRIPS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We're excited you will be joining us for a week of fun, hard work, and learning! We're sure you're excited too, but you may have a few questions before you arrive. We hope this will help you feel a little more relaxed about your decision to join us in beautiful Guatemala.

1. I've heard about violence in Guatemala, should I be concerned about safety?

Parts of Guatemala, such as some areas of Guatemala City and towns on the border with Mexico do struggle with high levels of violence. Rest assured, we will be in Antigua which is a very popular tourist destination and San Miguel Escobar, just a few minutes away, is a quiet farming community. Another other places we may go such as other cooperatives or site visits are also secure places and are monitored by DLG staff for safety changes. Just like in any city, always be mindful of your surroundings and keep an eye out for petty theft.

2. Can I bring my laptop?

Please don't bring any nice electronic equipment. This is less of a safety concern and more about trying to unplug and really take in your time in Guatemala. We have a laptop with Wi-Fi for everyone to share at the guesthouse and computers at the office if you need to use Skype for any emergency.

3. Can I take pictures?

Yes! Our farmers and artisans have a great deal of experience with groups so they are accustomed to having people take photos of them. It's still important to ask before you start snapping away, but they will nearly always say, "yes." You can feel free to take photos of group activities, hikes, construction and meals. However, please do not take photos of people you don't know, especially children. Put yourself in their shoes and imagine how uncomfortable it would be if someone from another country started photographing you and your children!

4. What's the food like?

Most meals eaten with farmers will be some combination of rice, sauce, meat and tortillas. Though very tasty, there isn't much variety. We will have a few meals in restaurants, there are some shops where you can buy soda and chips, but you may want to bring some of your own snacks.

5. I'm a vegetarian, will it be offensive if I don't eat the meat offered to me?

Thanks for being so thoughtful. Saying "no" to food is a huge cultural faux pas in Guatemala. However, our cooperative members have a lot of experience with the different diets of foreigners and completely understand if you tell them in advance that you are vegetarian. Just tell them (or ask your translator to tell them) "soy vegetariana/o".

6. I have a food allergy. What should I do?

Let us know ahead of time and we can try to accommodate, but it's a good idea to bring some of your own snacks. Gluten free and dairy free are pretty easy to work with as Guatemalans don't cook using much wheat or dairy. Please make sure we know about any serious allergies.

7. Is the food safe?

All of the farmers' wives in the co-op have taken a hygiene course and know how to cook for foreigners. Any beverage they give you will have been prepared with purified water.



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8. Speaking of the water...

Do not drink water from the faucet or use it to brush your teeth. We will provide purified water for drinking and to brush your teeth. If you prepare any of your own food you should use this water. If a drop or two gets in your mouth, it's nothing to worry about, but try to avoid it as best as you can.

9. How do I avoid getting sick?

Traveling and eating new foods always increases your risk of getting sick, but most people who come on our trips are fine. If you do get sick, it is likely a virus and you will start to feel better in about 12 hours with rest and fluids. Most people who get sick feel better less than a day later. The best way to avoid getting sick is to wash your hands frequently and stay hydrated. Some people find starting on probiotics before traveling helps them avoid getting sick.

10. Do I need any immunizations for this trip?

No immunizations are required for travel to Guatemala. However, we recommend the following wherever you're traveling:

- Make sure you are up to date with your **tetanus booster** because groups usually perform construction work.
- **Hepatitis-A** vaccination, which protects against food and water-borne diseases, a 2-shot series. The first should be given 4-6 weeks before departure for maximum immunization. The second is given 6 months after the first shot.
- **Hepatitis-B** vaccination which is a 3-shot series. The second dose must be given at least 1 month after the first dose. The third dose must be given at least 2 months after the second dose and at least 4 months after the first.
- **Typhoid**—CDC recommends this vaccine for most travelers, especially if you are staying with friends or relatives, visiting smaller cities or rural areas, or if you are an adventurous eater.

Malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases do not pose a health risk in Antigua and San Miguel Escobar due to high altitudes. Remember, we are not medical professionals: **talk to your doctor about what is best for you!**

11. How can I change money?

Do not change money at the airport. The airport has the worst exchange rate and it will take forever. You can either change dollars for quetzales (the Guatemalan currency) at the bank in Antigua or we can go to an ATM and you can take out money. We will have the chance to change money on the second day when your group goes to Antigua. You will need your passport to change money. It's always a good idea to let your bank know you will be out of the country. Note: The banks here are very particular about what dollars they will exchange. Any tear, mark, or stain will be rejected. Only flawless bills will be changed at the bank. The daily limit is USD\$120 and USD\$500 per month. To use an ATM, you will need a 4-digit PIN. If yours is more than 4 digits, please change it prior to coming to Guatemala. The withdraw limit is usually Q2000 per day.

12. How much money will I need?

Everything is provided for you except lunch on your free day, additional activities on your free day (for example, zip-lining at the Lake which costs \$35) and souvenirs. So, it depends on how much you think you will spend on souvenirs. It would probably be difficult to spend more than \$200 - a typical visitor might spend around \$100.

13. What's the weather like?

In the months between November and May the weather is very nice. We rarely have any rain during the dry season, and the temperature is usually between 55-75 degrees Fahrenheit. May-August the weather can still be very nice in the morning, but it is extremely likely that there will be rain, often very heavy rain, in the afternoon. The rain makes the temperature considerably chillier. In September and October it is not uncommon to have rain all day, every day.



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14. Do I need an adapter for my electronics?

Guatemala uses the same electrical outlets as the United States with a voltage between 110-120V.

15. Will I need a visa?

If you have a passport from the US, Canada and most European countries, you will receive a 90 day visa upon arrival. If you are from another country please check this [website](#)

16. Is there an exit fee?

The airport security fee and departure tax are included in your airfare, but it's a good idea to check your ticket receipt.

17. Can I bring things for the families and children in the community?

Please do not hand out candy or toys to children you do not know as this enforces the stereotype that foreigners have great wealth and will give it away. There are well over 200 children in the cooperative (about 30 families) and it would be difficult to bring enough toys or school supplies for all of them. Bubbles (especially the very small ones designed for weddings) make excellent gifts as they are inexpensive and can be given out to many children and encourage interaction between volunteers and the children in the community.

18. Can I bring back coffee and peanut butter?

Yes, as much as you can fit in your luggage!

19. The only thing I can say in Spanish is Feliz Navidad! Is that going to be a problem?

Knowing Spanish is certainly not a requirement! You will have a translator with you at structured activities. Though it's always appreciated if you try (hola, buenos dias, gracias), but you will not find yourself in a situation where you need to speak Spanish without a translator to help. You may want to review the short Spanish words and phrases document included in this packet.