



GUATEMALA: COMMUNITY PROJECT

With majestic volcanoes rising out of lush green rainforest, highland villages steeped in tradition and vibrant, spirited people, Guatemala put quite simply is a magical destination!

A natural paradise that ranks at the pinnacle of biological diversity for Central America, this 'Land of Eternal Spring' plays host to 19 ecosystems and a staggering array of flora and fauna, set amidst mountainous forest highlands, jungle plains and glistening volcanic beaches. The unique geology of Guatemala also includes a tremendous system of above-ground and subterranean caves, which the indigenous Maya believe serve as mystical portals between our world and the underworld.

Beautiful **Antigua**, where all of our placements are based, is arguably the most picturesque and certainly one of the oldest cities in Central America, characterised by a mellow, yet distinctly international feel. The local residents of Antigua are warmly referred to as Green bellies or *panza verde* due to the abundance of avocados that grow in the region. Antigua is one of the most popular places in Central America to learn Spanish so you are bound to meet lots of other students and travellers.



WHAT DO YOU GET?

- An exciting, never-to-be-forgotten adventure into Guatemala and Central America.
- An entry on your CV or résumé that will put you head and shoulders above most others in the job market.
- Experienced local staff with 24/7 back-up and support who'll meet you at the airport on your arrival - helps you **feel safe and never alone!**
- An in-depth Induction makes you **feel local straight away!**
- A unique insight into another culture – **see it from the inside** in a way you could never do as a tourist.
- An opportunity to **make lifelong friends from all over the world.**
- And best of all ... **an unforgettable experience!**

► SUMMARY FACTFILE

Start Dates	All year round - you choose your start and finish dates!
Duration	From 2 weeks to 12 weeks or longer, subject to visa requirements
Requirements	No qualifications, experience or knowledge of Spanish necessary..
Price	For up-to-date prices, please check our website www.travellersworldwide.com
What's included	► Accommodation ► Food ► Meeting you at the Airport and taking you back at the end of your project ► Transfer to your accommodation ► Transport to and from your project ► Full pre-departure support ► Local in-country team support and backup ► 24-hr emergency support ► 2 free t-shirts
What's not included	Flights, Insurance, Cost of Visas (if a visa is required, but we'll provide necessary documents and assistance).
Who can do this Project?	All our projects are open to all nationalities. Unless otherwise stated, you need to be aged between 17 and 70+

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PROGRAMME OVERVIEW:

If a formal classroom environment isn't for you but you'd like to lend a hand, help out and make a difference, this is the project for you! Here you'll help out where you can in local social centres, enjoy life in Antigua with the other volunteers and make a difference. These social centres struggle for money and assistance, so you can make a great deal of difference by simply being there.

The Community Programme

This project is all about helping out where you can, enjoying life in Antigua with the other volunteers and making a difference at the local social centres. These centres are often struggling for money and assistance, so simply by being there, you can make a great deal of difference.

Work Content.

Activities you may be involved in:

- Organising, packing and distributing donations of food and clothes to poor families
- Helping with arts & crafts lessons
- Gardening and general upkeep of outside areas
- Repairs and painting to help with the upkeep of the centres
- Organising donations of books and other items
- Washing, cleaning and cooking
- These are just a few of the activities you may take part in. If you have specific skills or interests, just let us know and we can try to arrange for you to help in that area if the work exists.

LOCATION:

In all the long, earnest discussions about where to get off the beaten track in [Guatemala](#), you can be sure the name Antigua won't come up. This is fantasyland – what the country would look like if the Scandinavians came in and took over for a couple of years. It's a place where power lines run underground, building codes are adhered to, rubbish is collected, traffic diverted and stray dogs 'disappear' mysteriously in the middle of the night.

But you'd be a fool to miss it. Antigua's setting is gorgeous, nestled between three volcanoes: Agua (3766m), Fuego (3763m) and Acatenango (3976m), and its streetscapes – with sprays of bougainvillea bursting from crumbling ruins, and pastel facades under terracotta roofs – offer photo opportunities at every turn. The language school scene is thriving, the hostels offer colonial-chic accommodations and the dining is some of the best in the country.

The most exciting time to visit Antigua is during Holy Week – especially Good Friday. It takes planning (reserve hotels at least four months in advance), as this is the busiest week of the year. Other busy times are June through August and November to April.

Antigua is cold after sunset, especially between September and March, so bring warm clothes, a sleeping bag or a blanket. Antigua residents are known by the nickname *panza verde* (green belly), as they are said to eat lots of avocados, which grow abundantly here.



ACCOMMODATION & FOOD:

Accommodation with host families means that Travellers volunteers get to eat, sleep, work, socialise and generally live like a Guatemalan. Most of the families take more than one volunteer or student at once (some up to 10!), so the atmosphere is somewhere between a regular family and a hostel... Often very social, but with the benefit of gaining insights into the Guatemalan way of life from the inside - **the best of both worlds!!**

Many of our volunteers remain friends with their host families long after they leave Guatemala and in some cases they return to the country later



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especially to visit their family. Many offer the option of single or shared rooms, and generally houses within the same town are in close proximity with each other. The accommodation is comfortable, with a 'western-style' bathroom.

All of your meals will be provided from Monday to Saturday, leaving you free to sample local eateries on Sundays. Expect to develop a taste for corn tortillas, tostadas and tacos in plentiful supply! Western and international dishes are also easily available in Antigua. Although Guatemalans are big on eating meat, we can easily cater for vegetarians.

VISAS:

For most nationalities visas are not required, but don't worry if you do require a visa we will liaise with you about your visa requirements, and make the visa process very easy.

FLIGHTS:

You have the option to arrange your own flights or we can assist you with your flight arrangements. If you would like us to do this for you, we will liaise with you regarding available flights and dates to suit you. All arrangements for your flight bookings/payments will be fulfilled by [Murray Rogers Travel Limited](#), ATOL No. 6856.

INDUCTION ON ARRIVAL:

When you arrive, you will be welcomed at the airport by our Guatemala Organiser, who will take you to your accommodation. During your first few days you will be given an induction so that you can learn about Guatemala and its culture, as well as useful information like how to use the transport system etc.

COSTS:

Please see the prices pages of our website [Full Price List](#). The price of this project is a reflection of the following costs:

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| ✓ Accommodation | ✓ UK administration |
| ✓ Food | ✓ Marketing (brochures, website design and maintenance, attending careers fairs, advertising, website listings and presentations) |
| ✓ Meeting you at the airport | ✓ Project Research/Site Inspection |
| ✓ Transport to and from your project | ✓ Staff Training/Equipment |
| ✓ Local in-country team support and backup | ✓ Donations to worthwhile projects |
| ✓ 24hr emergency helpline | |
| ✓ Full pre-departure support | |

HOW YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

By joining a Travellers Program you enable us to keep donating money to worthwhile projects around the world; from clothing and feeding school children, building playgrounds or funding vital conservation research - your participation makes these donations possible.

For every volunteer, a donation is made by Travellers on your behalf into the [Bridge The Gap Foundation](#). This Foundation was set up by us to donate directly to particularly worthwhile and necessary projects for children and animals around the world, and partners with other NGO's to raise match-funding for worthy projects.

COUNTRY PROFILE:

Rising between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, Guatemala covers an area just slightly smaller than England where rich coffee, cacao, fruit and sugar cane grow in abundance.

Brilliantly coloured weavings and textiles abound at the endless array of raucous fiestas and bustling market stalls, hinting at the magnificent human tapestry of living cultures which colours daily Guatemalan life and captivates even the most worldly of travellers. Guatemala is also famous for its kaleidoscopic buses!

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For many, Guatemala's rich and often turbulent history is another enticing aspect of visiting the country. Characterised by the rivalry and struggle between the indigenous Maya and colonising Europeans, this sometimes harmonious but often violent relationship is deeply rooted in the country's history and still plays a role in modern day politics.

Guatemala was the centre of the great Mayan civilisation from about 300 to 900 A.D. From the crumbling ancient ruins of this lost civilisation to the colonial architecture of the cobble-stoned villages, history oozes from every pore of Guatemala's towns and cities, hinting at an infinitely complex past which continues resonate into the present as different cultures mingle in this fascinating melting pot of humanity.

In the wildly beautiful Central highlands, the indigenous Mayan Indian culture still dominates, whereas in the sprawling metropolis of Guatemala City you are likely to see a colourful population of Ladinos, descendents of Europeans and Indians, African immigrants and the predominantly Hispanic European minority.

As for **things to do** with your spare time, whether you're an adventure-mad extreme sports enthusiast or a nature-loving bird-watcher, Guatemala's awesome unspoilt natural habitat will have something for you. The extraordinary terrain around the volcanoes and caves provides the perfect setting for **mountaineering** and **caving** (spelunking) whereas the fast-moving rivers are ideal for **boating**, **white-water rafting** and **windsurfing**, with Lake Atitlán also popular for **diving**. There's also a nearby turtle sanctuary – see above for volunteers holding the baby turtles on a trip there!

Besides this you can also find ample opportunity to go **mountain biking**, bathe in **hot springs** surrounded by lush green jungle, or indulge your passion for nature in one of the country's national parks - you might even catch a glimpse of the resplendent quetzal, Guatemala's national bird. Antigua itself is surrounded by three volcanoes,

Guatemala is a country bursting with beautifully striking features, biodiversity and an indigenous culture with a powerful and vibrant identity. It boasts of volcanoes, thick tropical forests, outstanding Mayan ruins that stretch out and above the surrounding forest canopy, beautiful lakes, and is bursting with exotic fauna, flora and wildlife.

One of the most beautiful and culturally rich countries in Central America it is also one of the largest, covering an area of over 108,000 sq Km (slightly smaller than England). Guatemala shares its main border with Mexico to the north, the east by the Caribbean Sea and Belize, on the west by the Pacific Ocean, and on the south by both Honduras and El Salvador.

Guatemala also has a fascinating environment, with over 8000 species of plants in 19 different ecosystems. It overflows with an abundance of animals; 250 species of mammals, 600 species of bird and 200 species of reptiles and amphibians. Guatemala is also home to the resplendent **quetzal**, the national bird, which is often used to symbolise Central America.

The landscape is awe inspiring, from mountainous forest highlands, to jungle plains, and volcanic beaches. There are 30 volcanoes spread through out the highlands in the Cuchumatanes range, they reach over 4,000m. The Cuchumatanes range includes the volcano **Tajumulco**, the tallest peak in Mesoamerica, standing at 4,220m.

There are 30 protected areas of national parks and biological reserves and north of Guatemala city the highlands of Alta Verapaz slowly descends into the low lands of **Petén**. Petén; part of Central America's largest tract of virgin rainforest, the Mayan Biosphere Reserve (MBR), encompasses the Guatemala-Mexico border. The low plains of the Petén form part of the tierra caliente, they are hot and humid through out the year.

Climate: Guatemala City and many other parts of the country have a stable and pleasant climate. Rainfall here is moderate with a distinct dry season from November to April. The Pacific slope is rich in coffee, cacao, fruit, and sugar plantations.

The Pacific coast is covered by vast sprawling beaches of glistening black volcanic sand and small palm trees. The coast is tropical, rainy, hot and humid most of the year. Air temperature often reaches over 32 C /89.6 F although the black sand of the Pacific coast in midday heat has been known to reach close to 50 C / 122 F. In Antigua, where you will be based for volunteer work, the temperature is quite comfortable as the town is settled and protected in the coolness of a valley.

THINGS TO DO IN: GUATEMALA



Due to Guatemala's amazing natural unspoilt habitat, there are a host of activities to do, be it trekking high above the cloud line on Volcano Tajumulco to a long soak in the amazing mineral waters of the hot springs of Fuentes Georgina. Here are some ideas;

- **Water Sports:** Guatemala's fast-moving rivers, including la pasion, el chiquibul, el usamacinta, el motagua and el cahabon are ideal for boating and rapids shooting. the rivers of alta verapaz, rio dulce and lakes izabal



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and atitlán are good for windsurfing, with lake atitlán also popular for diving. the pacific coast is one of the best places worldwide for sports fishing. make sure that water is safe for swimming before taking part in any water sports!

- Mountaineering:** Mountaineering within Guatemala is practiced on and around Guatemala's volcanoes. At 4200m (13,776ft) above sea level, the Tajumulco in the San Marcos region is the highest volcano in Central America. In spite of its height it is in mountaineering terms, technically an easy climb. Those requiring something more challenging might like to take a longer look at the Tolimán, with its 3158m twin peak summit. Whilst for novices, the summit of the volcano San Pedro can be reached in about six hours. One of the most visited volcanoes, given its proximity to Guatemala City, is Pacaya at 2252m (7386ft). Excursions to this constantly erupting volcano must be made in a group and with a guide. The INGUAT Tourist Centre within Antigua can provide important information. Take the opportunity to spend a night in the crater of a volcano, during the ascent of the Agua volcano at 3776m (1233ft), a magical opportunity to turn your friends green with envy.
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- Spelunking (Caving):** Terrain known as Karst is found throughout the Verapaces region and makes Guatemala one of the worlds leading spelunking destinations. Discover limestone caves with spellbinding rock formations leading down to partially underwater caves. Learn how the Mayan celebrated their rituals and even lived in some of them. Aktun Kan, Jobtzinaj, Lanquín, Poptún and the newly discovered La Candelaria are principal locations for caving. Most sites can be reached from Cobán.
 - Mountain biking:** Popular in many regions of Guatemala including Panajachel, Santa Catarina Palopó, and Antigua. There really is no better way than to experience the highland by bike. Bike tour operators have sprung up all over Guatemala and its worth taking one weekend out to experience the delights in the town of Pana' and more so the shores of Lake Atitlán.
 - Horse riding:** A very popular alternative to the bike whether it's through the rainforest, in the mountains or along beautiful beaches.
 - Hot springs:** The hot-springs of Fuentes Georginas are close to Zunil, with deliciously relaxing waters set amongst a verdant jungle-like background.
 - Bird Watching** - There are plenty of opportunities for Bird Watching and general wildlife viewing within the National parks, the Mayan Biosphere Reserve or the mangrove swamps near Monterrico. Such richness is rarely seen.
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- 24/7 emergency helpline for you and your family
- Free pick up from the nearest airport.

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

"I choose travellers because quite literally, they were the first organisation that it "clicked" with. I was lucky to find them and to have them help organise the trip. No one should have to do all this unsupported and if I hadn't gone

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through them, I know my trip wouldn't have been the same. Travellers were so supportive and I felt one hundred per cent confident when in Guatemala, that if I needed help, I could get in touch and they wouldn't hesitate to do all they could to help me out. Luckily, I never needed that help.

i was lucky to go with an organisation like travellers, who put me in touch with Ashley, a gap year student the same age as me, who lived in Scotland, only a few hours from where i lived in England. We got in touch and were fast friends, organising to actually fly out together and live together whilst in Guatemala. Travellers also, a few weeks before departure, put us in touch with Taylor, an American who we also lived with. Because of travellers, I had two amazing friends in Guatemala and left, not with two life long friends, but two sisters who I love so much and am so glad to have shared this incredibly experience with”

HOW TO BOOK:

Please complete a [booking form](#) online or you can send a postal booking from our free brochure. When we receive this, we'll telephone you to discuss the details and then start the exciting process of planning your trip!

We do hope you'll join us and are confident that you'll find this an incredible experience. Don't hesitate to contact us with any questions - we'll be happy to help you plan your exciting adventure!

You may also be interested in other courses with Travellers, or do other projects in our other destinations – please visit our [website](#) for details of all our projects. In fact you can choose from over 300 projects in 19 countries!

Make a Difference – Get Involved!

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