



TEACHING ENGLISH ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA



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.



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!



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.

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's splendour is protected by three giant guardian volcanoes Agua, Fuego and Acatenango, providing a stunning setting which attracts thousands of visitors every year. 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!

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,

Doing a placement in Guatemala will give you a chance to immerse yourself in this fascinating culture and to explore one of the world's most naturally diverse and beautiful lands. Whether you are doing a teaching placement or learning Spanish, amazing Guatemala is bound to leave a lasting impression!

YOUR WORK – TEACHING ENGLISH

Teaching English in Guatemala you'll gain valuable skills, confidence and the satisfaction of knowing that you are making a huge difference to the lives of your students. You don't need any qualifications to teach.

Travellers volunteers in Guatemala work in State schools, Private Schools and Language Centres. Volunteers with intermediate to advanced level Spanish also have the chance to teach in various different institutions including community centers, hospitals and churches. You may be asked to teach children or adults – it depends on your preferences, the availability of teaching spaces, the time you're there and whether the schools are on holiday or not. If your placement is for one month or thereabouts, the chances are that you will only be able to teach adults.

Both lesson time and frequency are variable and may change according to the school/s. Most of the teaching will be during the day on Monday to Friday, but it is possible that you will be allocated a few lessons in the late afternoon, early evening or on a Saturday. Lessons are generally held in 45 minute periods. The Schedule of teaching will vary depending on the school, possible teaching times are 7am – 9am, 10am, 12pm & 4pm, 7pm. (Don't worry - you won't be asked to teach at all of these times!)

With all of the teaching placements it is possible that you will teach in more than one place, as most schools are located reasonably close to each other.

COACHING SPORTS

Guatemalans are football crazy and it is also possible to assist in sports coaching in schools... the children will love you for it! Other sports include basketball, which runs a very close second to football. Please inform your Project Coordinator if you are interested in coaching sports and we will be happy to arrange it for you!

SUPPORT

We provide each volunteer with a *Teaching Suggestions Guide* which will be invaluable in helping you to structure a lesson and will give you lots of ideas for topics and materials to use in your classes. Our support staff in Guatemala are excellent and there is a 24 hour emergency international telephone line direct to the Head Office.

You'll also receive lots of help from the very friendly and helpful staff at your school, who are professional teachers, in structuring your lessons and general assistance in teaching. Whatever teaching experience you've had in the past, even if it's the first time you are standing up in front of a class, as a Travellers volunteer everyone will know that you are there simply to give whatever help you can – that's the whole point of volunteering through our organisation.

You may also be interested to know that we now operate a TEFL company offering two certificates in TEFL. TEFL is an internationally recognised and professional qualification in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. If you are looking to teach overseas, both voluntary or paid, TEFL will be an indispensable tool to help you. For more details visit our website at www.tefltime.com

ABOUT THE SCHOOLS (EDUCATION CENTRES)

Some of the schools available include:

Centro Educativo de Antigua - Each class has 8-15 pupils, age 6-45, with 3-5 hours teaching per day.

Infantil Snoopy - In the pre-school classes aged 4-11 there are 10-12 pupils per class. In the 1st to 6th grades aged 12-18 there are 17-20 per class. There are 3-5 hours of teaching available per day.



Escuela de Ingles Excelencia - There are 7-15 pupils per class, ranging in age from 3-60 years old. Teaching takes place in the evening for 3 hours.

Victor Manuel Asturias (in Sacatepequez, outside Antigua) - There are 34-36 pupils per class with 3-5 hours teaching in the morning or 2 hours in the afternoon, the school consists of 6-13 year olds.

ON YOUR ARRIVAL IN GUATEMALA

You will fly into Guatemala City Airport where you will be met by Mr Leonel Garcia, a member of Travellers staff. Leonel will introduce you to the area and escort you directly to your homestay accommodation. The next day you will be met at your accommodation and taken to the site of your placement. Our staff on the ground will ensure that you are given a full induction and orientation around the town of Antigua.



Travellers General Manager in Guatemala is Ms Lilian Santizo (left), who lives just outside of Antigua. Lilian will oversee your placement and be on hand for help, advice and support throughout.

ACCOMMODATION & FOOD

Accommodation with host families means that Travellers volunteers get to eat, sleep, work, socialise and generally live like a Guatemalan. Local family homestays enable you to fully experience the local culture *from the inside*. 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 especially to visit their family.



Some homestays are more like small hotels, which can accommodate between 1 and 10 volunteers at any one time. 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 (usually shared with the family).

For the more independently-minded traveller, we also work with families who will ensure that your needs are taken care of whilst leaving you free to come and go as you please. Please let your Project Coordinator know your preferences, and we will make sure that you are placed in the most suitable accommodation.

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! Although it could be said that the emphasis with Guatemalan food is more nutritional than culinary, western and international dishes are also easily available in Antigua. Although Guatemalans are big on eating meat, we can easily cater for vegetarians as long as we know in advance.

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK



NAME: Gloria Sanders
DATE OF BIRTH: 15 June 1985
NATIONALITY: British

Experience Gained So far : it's been fun, informative and it's bringing out my 'teachery-ness', which everyone has always said I have in me! I never took it as a compliment, but now I'm proud to be a teacher!! It has surpassed my expectations, the children are so intelligent and quick, they are helping me with my Spanish and they laugh with me, not at me, when I talk total rubbish! I'm starting to really love my classes as I get to know the students and they start to get to know me better... of course I have good days and bad days, but on the good days it's the best thing ever and I have to keep myself from smiling like a loony in case I get deported...

The best thing... It is constantly interesting as I am meeting new students every day, and the variation came when I got to go to the orphanage and sit in on a class. My work supervisor has been really lovely and has made me feel welcome and relaxed, which isn't hard anyway in a place like Antigua! I have a really good link with the Spanish school which means that I am able to meet loads of the students there, join in the activities, and generally mingle with the amazingly vast amount of other students! The other two girls staying with the family are students. All in all the co-ordination of my placement is really impressive!

Would you recommend this placement to anyone else? : If my friend was going for a couple of months I would say 'Yes! Go for it, don't think twice, do it!' They would have to be prepared to stand up in front of maybe 15 kids, and teach them. That can be quite scary at first, it's still scary, but the adrenaline overtakes the nerves sooner or later, hopefully sooner!

Typical day in the life : My teaching schedule grew slowly, but I teach 5 hours a day now! I think I will get more, which I am grateful for. My day starts with teaching grammar to students all at intermediate level between 8-9am. Between 10 – 12 am I teach students basic grammar. Between 5-6pm I teach some students the complete basics. I do Monday to Friday. Travelling around Antigua is easiest on foot and it's always such gorgeous weather it seems a shame not to walk. The first weekend I was here I went to Monterrico, down on the Pacific coast, it's a 2 hour bus ride and all the hotels are on the beach! I'm hoping to go to Chichicastenago this weekend for a day trip to the market. And then there are all the other places I've yet to see!

THE NEXT STEP

If you would like to join us on one of our exciting projects then please fill in either an online application form at our website (www.travellersworldwide.com) or one that is attached to our brochure. Once you have booked and confirmed your place we will send you detailed pack information regarding your placement and country.

I do hope you join us and please do call or email if you have any questions at all about this or any of our other projects – 01903 502595 or email info@travellersworldwide.com

If you would like to know more about Travellers in general, or about any of our other projects we run in over 18 countries worldwide, please visit our website at www.travellersworldwide.com

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