

GUATEMALA



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LETTER TO POTENTIAL APPLICANT

Dear Potential Applicant,

Welcome to one of the most beautiful journeys of your life. This isn't about what you're doing anymore. It's about what you are becoming. You can't help it anymore. You are on the path of complete transformation: Men and Women made new in the sight of God, and fueled to serve a broken world as a response to the overwhelming kindness of God. God is relentlessly and actively working in your life with hopes that one of these days in the very near future you will decide to give up everything to run after him. This is the priority. He wants all of you.

There is an untapped portion of God that he wants us to get into. There is growth beyond what we ever thought. There is sacrifice beyond what thought we give up.

If you are feeling afraid right now of anything regarding this mission trip, I would consider you to be completely normal—and not the only one. Are you afraid of making new friendships on your team? Are you afraid they will judge you? Are you afraid that we won't want to send you? Are you afraid that you won't get enough money? Are you afraid something dangerous is going to happen? Are you afraid that you're going to get a disease? Are you afraid that you don't have enough faith? Are you thinking that you're not "good" enough?

What are you afraid of?

Now pray about it. Lay it down at the feet of Jesus, and look up to try and see his face. He has the most loving eyes that exist. God is inviting you into a courageous life of trust. This experience is designed to lure you away from every spiritual immaturity and into spiritual maturity.

Take some time to consider if this trip is right for you. We certainly hope that you'll be able to join us.

With love and prayer for you,

The 12Stone Global Missions Staff

Last Updated 10/2011

INTRODUCTION TO GUATEMALA



HISTORY & GOVERNMENT

Guatemala is right beneath Mexico with the Pacific Ocean on one side and the Caribbean Sea on the other. The weather should be hot during the day with cool nights and mornings. Guatemala has a rich Mayan history, and like many Central and South American countries, it was taken over by the Spanish and gained its independence again in 1821. During the second half of the 20th century,

it experienced a variety of governments, as well as a 36-year guerrilla war. The government signed a peace agreement in 1996 which ended a war that left 100,000 people dead and by some estimates over a million refugees. Recently in 2005, a massive mudslide buried the Atitlan lakeside village of Panabaj caused by heavy rains from a hurricane causing the death of as many as 1,400 people and leaving 5,000 homeless. Guatemala is currently dealing with serious problems in sex trafficking, and it's a staging area for many illegal drugs.



Capital City: Guatemala City

National Holidays: Generally, offices and government buildings are closed on these major holidays.

January 1st New Years Day

Easter

May 1st Labor Day

June 30th Army Day

August 15th Assumption (Guatemala City Only)

September 15th Independence Day

October 20th Revolution Day

November 1st All Saints' Day

December 24th Christmas Eve

December 25th Christmas Day

POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

Population: 14.3 Million (UN 2010)

Ethnic groups:

Mestizo (mixed Amerindian-Spanish - in local Spanish called Ladino) and European 59.4%, K'iche 9.1%, Kaqchikel 8.4%, Mam 7.9%, Q'eqchi 6.3%, other Mayan 8.6%, indigenous non-Mayan 0.2%, other 0.1% (2001 census)

Religions:

Roman Catholic, Protestant, indigenous Mayan beliefs

Languages:

Spanish (official) 60%, Amerindian languages 40%

note: there are 23 officially recognized Amerindian languages, including Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi, Mam, Garifuna, and Xinca

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 69.1%

male: 75.4%

female: 63.3% (2002 census)

CLIMATE & TOPOGRAPHY



Guatemala's climate is tropical and relatively temperate and pleasant. The rainy season is between May and November. So if your team is planning to be there in rainy season be sure to bring a rain jacket.

Guatemala is covered in lush Mountains and Volcanoes. You may even find yourself playing soccer with kids in a cloud. Most 12Stone teams will end up doing the majority of their ministry in Lake Atitlan, which National Geographic has published as, "One of the Top Ten Most Beautiful Lakes in the World".

MEALS & FOOD

The Guatemalan staples are corn made into tortillas or tamales, black beans, and rice. Depending on a person's wealth they may also eat chicken, pork, beef, and sometimes fish and shellfish. There is a lot of farm land in Guatemala and they produce a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables including avocados, sweet potatoes, lettuce, squash, carrots, and tomatoes. Fruits include pineapples, dragon fruit, papayas, mangoes, a variety of melons, citrus fruits, and guavas. The coffee is some of the best in world!



12Stone teams will eat a mixture of native Guatemalan food and American food. We cannot stress enough the importance of only eating food approved by the trip leaders and Impacto. The streets are lined with the delicious aroma of food vendors, and you should always assume that they are unsafe to eat at unless otherwise stated. Please never eat unapproved food.

Impacto goes through extensive measures to make sure their food is tasty and safe for North American stomachs. A usual day will include a big hot breakfast, a bagged sandwich and chips for lunch, and a well-rounded dinner all with a mixture of traditional Guatemalan food and American food.

EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMY

Poverty in Guatemala is widespread particularly among rural people who account for 71% of the country's poor population. However, the unemployment rate looks favorable in comparison to other countries at 3.2%. Within rural poor communities women are among the most vulnerable groups, together with children and young people.

Pockets of poverty can be found across the country, generally in rural areas inhabited mainly by indigenous communities. There is also a 'poverty belt' that runs across the northern and north-western regions. These areas were severely affected by more than three decades of civil war up to the mid 1990s. The average Guatemalan's per capita income is \$4,965, and Guatemala's most important natural resources is its oil, timber, nickel, gold, and arable land.



TRANSPORTATION



Recycled and often colorfully painted former US school buses fill the streets of Guatemala along with adapted Indian rickshaws called "tuk tuks" and motor bikes. Larger teams will spend the week being transported in buses, and smaller teams will be in vans. Vehicle traffic tends to move at high speeds and with little regulation. Vehicles generally have the right of way so pedestrians should be careful and always look both ways before crossing streets.

Often, teams will take a boat across Lake Atitlan to do some sightseeing on their shopping day.

The major international airport is in Guatemala City.

OTHER RESOURCES

Your trip leaders will do their best to equip you with all the information you'll need to know, but ultimately we expect participants to do research and take personal responsibility to become a well-advised travelers.

Much information on Guatemala is available through other resources, such as books or websites. Participants are encouraged to do as much research as possible. A visit to an online bookstore (e.g. Amazon.com) searching *Guatemala* yields a list of books that may be helpful. A brief list of some of the websites available are below.

Look up Country Specific Information at:

www.cia.gov Gives statistics, and brief overviews of the country's political state and economics.

travel.state.gov Find current Travel Alerts and Government Issued Travelling Advice.

www.youtube.com Has many short documentaries on Guatemala.

www.lonleyplanet.com A secular travel website with lots of practical advice.

news.google.com Create a e-mail alert for new articles relating to *Guatemala* to stay updated on current events.

WHAT TO BRING

Every Participant will be allowed:

1 Carry-On:	Backpack or Small Suitcase or Guitar
1 Personal Item:	Purse or Small Travel Bag
1 Personal Suitcase (50 lbs or less):	Personal Clothes and Supplies
1 Ministry Suitcase (50 lbs or less):	Ministry Supplies (As Advised by Trip Leader)

Please make sure you are aware of the airline regulations for kinds of items that you can pack. After your team leader issues your flight itinerary, you can look up international luggage information on the airline's website.

Packing Checklist

Travel List	General List	HIS check list	HER check list
Spending Money (\$50-\$100 Cash)	Bible	Light Jacket	Light Jacket
Passport	Pen & Notebook for Journaling	Shorts	Long Shorts (Men's Basketball Shorts or Bermuda Length)
Copy of Passport	Backpack or Purse	Jeans	Jeans or Capri's
Insurance card	Anti-Bacterial Hand Gel	Shirts	Tops (no spaghetti strap or tank tops)
Emergency Phone #'s	Insect Repellant	Socks	Socks
Medicines (in original containers)	Sunscreen	Underwear	Underwear
	Deodorant	PJ's/Sleepwear	PJ's/Sleepwear
	Shampoo	Comfortable Shoes	Comfortable Shoes
	Soap	Wash Cloths/Towel	Wash Cloths/Towel
	Toothbrush/Toothpaste	Sweatshirt/Sweats	Sweatshirt/Sweats
	Band-Aids	Flip-flops for Shower	Flip-flops for Shower
		Hat, Visor, Bandana	Hat, Visor, Bandana
		Church Clothes	Skirt

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & FUNDS

Passport: In order to be allowed entry into Guatemala participants will need an up-to-date passport.

Visas are not currently required of Americans traveling to Guatemala for stays of 90 days or less. However, customs and immigration processing can take some time. In order to make the process as smooth and efficient as possible, participants should (1) make sure they answer each question on the forms, even if information is repeated, and (2) be patient and understanding. Americans often have poor reputations as tourists so a good attitude and a positive demeanor is essential.

All trip participants will be required to keep their passports on them at all times. The passport must be guarded above all other possessions due to a high passport theft rate.

In the case that a participant loses or misplaces their passport, we will drive the 4-5 hour drive to the closest American Embassy in Guatemala City, and ask them to issue a new passport. It's possible that it could take 1 day to a few weeks to get a new passport issued. So please be very aware of where your passport is at all times.

Money: The trip cost covers all regular expenses including food, housing, transportation, and appropriate tips. However, some may wish to bring additional funds for gifts, souvenirs, and airport food.

We recommend \$50-\$100 spending money for gifts, souvenirs, and airport food. The trip leader will go to a local bank to exchange the team's money to *quetzales* before the scheduled shopping day.

Credit cards are good to have in case of an emergency although they are not required. Most credit card companies and banks require verification from the cardholder before they'll process international transactions. Also, check with your Credit Card Company or bank prior to the trip to determine any transaction fees.

Tipping is done at a rate of 10%, and it is best to not over tip.

The barter system is generally used except at fine shops and stores that say "Fixed Prices". The salesperson will quote a price above what they actually expect to be paid. The prospective buyer is expected to counteroffer and the negotiation continues until either a mutually acceptable price is reached or the buyer walks away. Be aware that if the salesperson agrees to the buyer's offer, then the buyer is expected to purchase the item; the salesperson will be very angry if you do not. However, the buyer is at liberty to walk away if the salesperson does not agree to the price. Favorite items to buy for those visiting Guatemala are wood carvings, jewelry, scarves, purses, sweaters, leather goods, hammocks, paintings, and coffee.



TECHNOLOGY

Participants are encouraged, generally, to leave expensive technology items at home. Because of the severe poverty, expensive technology items can be a magnet for thieves and can put the whole team at risk. In addition, these items can

be distractions from the team and the work of the team. Also, participants should let friends and family know that opportunities for phone calls or emails back to the US will be minimal or non-existent. Participants are generally encouraged not to bring personal laptops unless for a specific project.

CLOTHES & SHOES

Participants need to choose clothing carefully in order to be sure they are practical yet modest by Guatemalan standards. Remember that any laundry will not be available on short-term trips. Temperatures can average 55F- 75F, so please packing accordingly.



Women: Women should wear long shorts or skirts and t-shirts on most days. A long skirt or dress is needed for Sunday church. Skirts should not be tight-fitting and should come below the knee, even when sitting down. Check skirts ahead of time to see if they require a slip. Showing thighs maybe considered evidence of promiscuity in Guatemala.

Shirts/blouses that are low cut in the front are never appropriate, and female participants should take care that necklines do not gap when bending over. Spaghetti straps, tank tops, halter-tops or strapless tops are never appropriate. Shirts/blouses should be long enough to reach the top of the skirt; no midriff or undergarment should be visible, even when bending or stretching.

Customs are changing in Guatemala just as they are everywhere in the world, so there will be Guatemalan women who dress more casually and/or less modestly especially in Guatemala City. However, it is still important for 12Stone participants to follow these guidelines to ensure that their actions are not misinterpreted by others.

Women are should be prepared, if asked by team leader, to remove any body piercings, besides earrings (tongue, nose, eyebrow, lip, etc.) or to cover tattoos, in order to be culturally sensitive.

Men: Men should wear pants or shorts each day. T-shirts or polo shirts are acceptable for everyday wear. Sleeveless shirts are never appropriate. Shirts should reach the top of the pant; visible boxers are not appropriate. A button-down shirt, nice dress slacks, and close-toed shoes are needed for Sunday church.

Men also need to be prepared, if asked by team leader, to remove any body piercings (ears, tongue, nose, eyebrow, lip, etc.) or to cover tattoos in order to be culturally sensitive.

Army fatigues, camouflage, and/or anything with military insignias or logos should not be worn, ever. Army duffel bags should be not be used for luggage. Ammunition boxes should not be used to pack cameras or film. Wearing articles of clothing that advertise alcohol, tobacco, sex or anything offensive are prohibited.

If in doubt, don't bring it - or, after arrival, ask.

MEDICAL & HEALTH SUPPLIES

All missions' participants must show proof of vaccinations, and proof of current health insurance to be admitted onto a 12stone mission trip. Every trip participant is responsible to make aware to the trip leader all physical and psychological ailments. In some circumstances it may be a requirement to bring back up prescription medicine packed in multiple bags. This is determined at the discretion of the trip leader.



Required Vaccines

- Routine Vaccines:
 - Routine shots such as, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine, etc.
- Typhoid Fever Vaccine
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B

For more information check on the Guatemala info pages at the Center for Disease Control's website. www.cdc.gov

Malaria medicine is not recommended by the CDC for the cities we will be going in Guatemala: Lake Atitlan, Antigua, and Guatemala City.

Due to the new environment, new food of a country, and long hours playing with dirty kids, often a few participants will get a stomach bug or traveler's diarrhea. Being properly vaccinated is the best way to avoid getting sick. You can also decrease your chances of getting sick by using hand sanitizer often, by washing hands with soap and water, and by seeing that flies stay away from your food.

In the case that a team member gets sick, a team leader will stay with the sick person at the hotel to let them rest for a day. Most often, the bug passes within 1-2 days. In the case of a medical emergency, participants will receive the best care possible available in Guatemala City completely up to the high standards of modern health care.

Water: You will be given a bottle of water when you arrive at your lodging facilities. Please keep this bottle and refill it from the large 5-gallon bottles provided during the week. If you lose your bottle, you can get another but try to hang onto your bottle. Drink only bottled water **even** to brush your teeth. If you sing in the shower ... try not to swallow a lot of water, you could get sick. Remember the **ICE** is no safer than the water, only use ice declared safe by your team leader!

Animals: Please do not pet **ANY** animals: dogs, cats, cows, horses. Animals are not vaccinated You also could get lice from the animals very easily and then you'll be miserable! Worse, you could get bitten.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

FRI/SAT arrival: USA to Guatemala City; If time permits in afternoon: Visit Antigua [*1-hour drive*] for touring ruins, Jade Factory (make jewelry from stones), Open-Air Markets

SUN: Attend church in AM; Either depart for Lake immediately following lunch [*4-hour drive*]; or Do trip to Antigua mentioned above

MON-THURS: Work in villages across the lake

FRI: Boat across Lake and spend couple hours shopping in Panajachel; Return to Guatemala City [*3-hour drive*]

SAT: Travel to USA

