

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

GUATEMALA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



October 2007



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to pre-service training in Guatemala! I am sure you are excited and have many questions. Peace Corps/Guatemala prepared this book to provide you with information, friendly advice, and resources to help you start on your path of discovery. It will certainly not answer all of your questions and may even raise more! There are as many perspectives on Guatemala as there are people living here. With time, you will find your own answers and definition of Guatemala. We do know that one of the most significant factors in Volunteer satisfaction is the appeal of Guatemala and Guatemalans themselves.

Peace Corps/Guatemala will offer you solid support, training, a well-designed project assignment, and a carefully selected site in which to live and work. In return, we have high expectations of the Volunteers who accept the challenge to serve. Please review this book carefully before deciding whether you are willing to make the lifestyle adjustments and personal sacrifices necessary to represent the Peace Corps, as the responsibility goes well beyond your work assignment.

A two-year commitment to the Peace Corps is not made easily or casually. It is a commitment you will need to renew frequently throughout your two years. You will be challenged in every way imaginable and your patience will be tried to its limits. But if you come with an open mind, a warm heart, willingness to work, and a good sense of humor, you will do well. We offer you this opportunity to serve the people of Guatemala and to have an experience that may change the way you view the world and yourself.

If you feel you have the right commitment, motivation, and flexibility to carry out the duties of a Peace Corps Volunteer, then we look forward to you joining the dynamic group of Volunteers already serving in Guatemala. I look forward to meeting you down here.

Sincerely,
Todd Sloan
Country Director



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PEACE CORPS/GUATEMALA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in Guatemala

The first Peace Corps Volunteers arrived in Guatemala in 1963. Since then, more than 4,500 Volunteers have served in Guatemala, providing assistance to rural families in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). During an average year, approximately 180 Volunteers serve in Guatemala. Currently, Peace Corps Volunteers are assigned to work on projects related to agriculture, environment, health, small business development, youth, and municipal development.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Guatemala

Projects evolve with the changing needs and opportunities in Guatemala. Brief descriptions of our current projects follow.

Agricultural Sector

Sustainable Agriculture Development

This project focuses on teaching small farmers to produce non-traditional crops and raise small animals for either family consumption or the local market. Agricultural production Volunteers provide training in organic production techniques, soil management, and utilization of local resources.

Marketing Volunteers teach farmers basic marketing tools to improve family incomes, including financial record-keeping and analysis of production costs, market and price analysis, production planning, and post-harvest management.

Environmental Sector

The purpose of the environmental conservation and income-generation project is to increase the income of families living in ecologically sensitive areas through the promotion of eco-tourism, environmental education, and the sustainable harvest of wildlife and forest products. The project is divided into eco-tourism, environmental education, and DPM (disaster preparedness and mitigation).

Health Sector

Healthy Schools

Volunteers in this project facilitate health education with accredited Guatemalan primary school teachers, who are trained by the Volunteer to teach health lessons. Volunteers teach students about health and personal hygiene, assist in developing training workshops for teachers, and work with parent-school committees to promote school sanitation.

Appropriate Technology for Family Health

Volunteers in this project teach rural families about health and simple technologies that can improve family health conditions. Volunteers work directly with families and community groups to build technologies such as improved cooking stoves, water systems, and waste treatment facilities (e.g., latrines).

Small Business and Youth Development Sector

Small Business Development

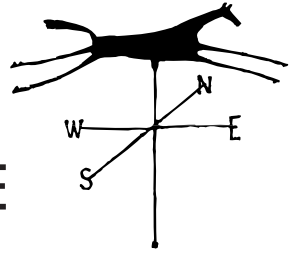
Volunteers in this project teach basic business management skills to small business entrepreneurs and youth so that they can make better business decisions. This project is expanding its youth component to train adolescents in life skills (e.g., HIV/AIDS prevention) and community development.

Municipal Development

Municipal development Volunteers work with personnel from rural governments to strengthen government ability to provide basic services and infrastructure to isolated areas. Volunteers train rural communities to identify, prioritize, program, execute, and evaluate community development projects.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: GUATEMALA AT A GLANCE



History and Government

For much of its post-contact history, Guatemala was a colonial state, in which the Crown and the Church were the sole sources of legitimate power. The compensation for colonial administrators was in the form of land grants and control over the people living on those lands. Colonial administrators were expected to collect taxes on behalf of the Crown, and the expectation was that a portion of the taxes collected would be used by the administrator for personal expenses.

Guatemala gained independence from Spanish colonial rule on September 15, 1821. During the second half of the 20th century, Guatemala experienced a variety of military and civilian governments as well as a 36-year guerrilla war, which led to the massacre of more than 200,000 people and created some 1 million refugees. Ninety-two percent of the deaths were attributed to the Guatemalan military. In 1996, the government signed a peace agreement formally ending the conflict. Although the signing of the peace accord ended the open armed conflict, the causes of the war are deeply rooted and tenaciously resistant. Former combatants and perpetrators of the massacres often live side by side with the victims and their families. A continued high level of violence and crime is an unfortunate part of the ongoing struggle of all Guatemalans to recover from the trauma of war.

Guatemala is a constitutional, democratic republic. The present constitution became effective in January 1986. It was suspended by President Jorge Serrano from May 1993 until his ousting in June of that year. The executive branch consists

of the president and vice president, elected through a popular vote every four years, and cabinet members appointed by the president. There is a unicameral congress; members are elected by popular vote every four years. Supreme Court members, who serve five-year terms, are appointed by the president of Guatemala and the outgoing president of the Court. Suffrage is universal for Guatemalans over the age of 18, excluding soldiers on active duty in the armed services. The country is divided into 22 departments.

Oscar Berger, the current president of Guatemala, took office in January 2004. This followed a rather contentious, but peaceful election process that included the candidacy of former general Rios Montt, considered by many Guatemalans to be responsible for the actions of military forces accused of widespread massacres during the civil war. President Berger's government has been relatively successful by historical standards though it has faced significant problems and limitations. The election season began in May 2007 with elections for the president, Congress, and mayors. While corruption charges and violence marred campaigning, the elections on September 9, 2007, were peaceful, resulting in a run-off election for the presidency in November 2007. The new government will take power in January 2008.

Economy

Agriculture is the largest economic sector, accounting for approximately 60 percent of the workforce, 25 percent of the gross domestic product, and 30 percent of exports. Wealthy farmers, using the best agricultural land, produce traditional exports: coffee, bananas, cardamom, cotton, beef, and sugar. Subsistence farmers work on small plots of marginal land,

mainly producing beans and corn for local consumption. A quickly expanding non-traditional sector produces and exports non-indigenous fruits, vegetables, ornamental plants, and flowers. Many hope that the recently ratified Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) will open new export and investment opportunities that will benefit both large- and small-scale producers.

Manufacturing and construction account for one-fifth of gross domestic product. Assuming office in January 1996, then President Arzu worked to implement a program of economic liberalization and political modernization. The signing of the peace accords in December 1996 removed a major obstacle to foreign investment. Remaining challenges include increasing government revenues, negotiating further assistance from international donors, and increasing the efficiency and openness of both government and private financial operations.

People and Culture

With urban populations of Spanish-speaking *ladinos* (the term used for people whose primary cultural identification is as non-Indian) and rural populations of indigenous peoples, including *Quiché*, *Q'eqchi'*, *Kaqchikel*, *Mam*, *Tz'utujil*, and more than 20 other ethnic groups. Guatemala straddles the frontier between traditional village cultures and a national culture. At the risk of greatly over-simplifying these extremely complex phenomena, Guatemalan village culture tends to be organized along lines of familial and marriage relationships. Outsiders, even those with the best of intentions, tend to be viewed by villagers with suspicion. The Guatemalan village culture tends to focus on those aspects of life that reinforce the community's understanding of its shared history, and there is the tendency to idealize the past. In general, Guatemalan

villagers consider the problems they confront to be the result of outside forces or the consequence of villagers' failure to follow local cultural traditions. The national culture, toward which the country is gradually moving, is organized along the lines of geographic residence, encompassing successively larger administrative units, culminating in the idea of the nation itself. Within the national culture, there is the belief that local communities are inherently the organizational unit best able to resolve local problems. The reconciliation of these two world views is one of the major challenges that Guatemala faces.

Environment

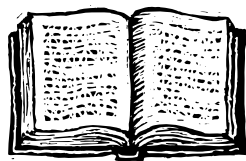
Guatemala possesses a striking topography and a wide range of climates—from hot, low-lying rainforests to cold mountains reaching 4,220 meters in elevation. The country is home to a wealth of biodiversity and natural beauty, which is partially what has made it a popular tourist destination. You will find cloud forests echoing with the calls of howler monkeys; crisp, scenic crater lakes; mangroves and beaches; and dusty deserts, all within a country about the size of Tennessee.

Guatemala lies at the convergence of four tectonic plates and experiences frequent seismic activity, mostly small tremors. The last major earthquake occurred in 1976. There are a number of volcanoes in Guatemala. Many are dormant; however, Volcán Pacaya and Volcán de Fuego, located near the capital city, erupt with some frequency, though eruptions are more scenic than damaging.

NOTES



RESOURCE LIST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



We offer a list of websites for you to search for additional information about the Peace Corps and Guatemala, or connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that links change. We have tried to make sure all these links are active and current, but we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, please also remember that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the United States government. You may also find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience their service in the same way.

General Information about Guatemala:

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Huehuetenango to information about converting currency from the dollar to the Quetzal. Just click on your country of service and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

Visit this site to learn all you need to know about any country in the world.

www.state.gov

This is the U.S. State Department's website, which issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Guatemala and learn more about its social and political history.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments of countries around the world.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information about countries around the world. Each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political backgrounds.

www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/infonation/e_glance.htm

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries worldwide.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees

www.rpcv.org

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the "friends of" groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities.

www.peacecorpswriters.org

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts from countries around the world.

www.rpcvwebring.org

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

<http://www.mybookmarks.com/public/pcguatemala>

Peace Corps/Guatemala has organized this site with links to useful websites for Volunteers and their work.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About Guatemala:

Prensa Libre: www.prensalibre.com (in Spanish)

Siglo Veintiuno: www.sigloxxi.com (in Spanish)

La Hora: www.lahora.com.gt (in Spanish)

El Periódico: www.elperiodico.com.gt (in Spanish)

The Revue: www.revuemag.com/home/ (In English)

Recommended Books:

1. Archdiocese of Guatemala. *Guatemala: Never Again!* Trans. Thomas Quigley. Orbis Books (1999)
2. Victor Montejo. *Voices from Exile: Violence and Survival in Modern Maya History*. University of Oklahoma Press (1999)
3. Victor Perera and Daniel Chauche (Photographer). *Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy*. University of California Press (1995)

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
4. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
5. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999.
6. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.

7. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
8. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we consider normal in the United States. Guatemala's mail service is fair, but often unreliable. Mail normally takes at least one to two weeks to arrive; however, it is common for letters to arrive much later, or never at all. It is recommended that you arrange a system of numbering correspondence with family and friends.

Packages and letters with enclosures may also be sent directly to you in care of the Peace Corps office in Guatemala City. Again, please note that the mail system is not considered reliable. The address of the Peace Corps office is:

"Your Name," PCT
8 Calle 6-55, Zone 9
Guatemala City, 01009
Guatemala, Central America
Office Tel. # 502.2384.3800 (needed for courier packages:
FedEx, DHL, etc.)

Once you complete training and are assigned to your site, you can decide how to receive your mail and inform family and friends. Some Volunteers choose to receive mail at a local post office; others prefer to have mail held at the Peace Corps office in Guatemala City.

Receiving “care packages” can be problematic—packages might be held at the central post office for pick-up and customs duties will be your responsibility. Often, the packages are opened or never arrive at all. Experience has shown that small padded envelopes are most likely to arrive intact.

Telephones

All major cities in Guatemala have public phone and fax service. The national phone company has established offices with phone banks, where you can make and receive calls for a fee. Smaller towns or *pueblos* will often have one community phone that can be used for a fee. In very rural areas and small villages, phone service is usually not available.

The organization to which you are assigned (your host agency) will most likely have telephone service at its office; however, that office might be some distance away from where you live. In the more developed cities, residential phone service is available, and there are a few Volunteers who have home phones.

Cell phone service is extremely popular among Volunteers; 100 percent of them have cell phones. Volunteers generally purchase these out of their living allowances. We strongly discourage you from bringing a cell phone with you from the United States, as it is highly unlikely that your plan will cover Guatemala and the surrounding region. Most Volunteers acquire a cell phone during training. Once you have been assigned to your site, you can determine which cell phone service is best in that part of the country.

The Peace Corps office in Guatemala can be reached by direct dialing from the United States. The number is 011.502.2384.3800. Volunteers are not permitted to use telephones at the Peace Corps office in Guatemala to call family and friends unless the call pertains to an emergency and is approved by the country director.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

Computer and Internet access are growing in Guatemala. Much like the telephone, most Volunteers will only be able to use these services when traveling to a central location. If your host agency has a computer, you might be able to arrange for access for work-related or personal use. Internet cafés can be found in most Guatemalan cities that are popular tourist destinations. In many instances, you can compose work offline and then go to a café to send it via the Internet. Since connection fees can be high, Peace Corps/Guatemala includes a small stipend for Internet use in your monthly living allowance to help defray the costs. There are also Internet-connected computers at the Peace Corps office and training center.

Some Volunteers do bring laptop computers with them, which they are able to use for work purposes, but they may not be able to access the Internet. Palm Pilots, because of their small size and lower cost, are good options for day-to-day use. Possessing a laptop or Palm Pilot can be a security concern in Guatemala, since they command high prices on the black market. They can also be damaged or lost.

Housing and Site Location

Volunteer housing and site locations vary depending on your project and the type of work you will do. Peace Corps staff work with your host agency, Volunteers who currently live in the area, and municipal leaders to locate appropriate sites and determine if the living conditions meet selection criteria established by the Peace Corps. In addition, the Peace Corps consults with security staff at the U.S. embassy to review any pertinent safety concerns that might be present.

Peace Corps/Guatemala Volunteers must live with a family during the first three months of their service (this is after the pre-service training, where you also live with a family in your training community). This helps Volunteers better integrate into their community and aligns with Guatemalan culture where it is uncommon for single people to live alone. There are often living arrangements in Volunteer sites where there is private space within a family compound-type area. This affords privacy to the Volunteer and the many benefits of meeting your community with the guidance and support of one of its members. By living with a family, you will more fully experience Guatemalan culture. Many Volunteers become very close to their host families and find that living with them is one of the most rewarding aspects of their service

After the initial three-month period in your site, you will be involved in the selection of your permanent housing. The type of house you live in will depend on what is common in the area. In a city or large town, this will likely be a cement block house with a tin or tile roof and a solid floor. Most will have electricity. Most households in Guatemala have a *pila*, a large cement sink for washing dishes and clothes, with a section for collecting water. In more developed areas, you will likely have plumbing, although the water may go off and on. You may have a flush toilet or use a latrine that is separate from the house.

Volunteers in more rural areas may have a house of cement, *adobe* (homemade brick), with a roof of tin, tile, or thatch. Most have solid floors, but in poorer areas some have dirt floors. Electricity is present in almost all areas, even small villages, and some will use a generator for a few hours each night. However, power outages are very frequent, especially in rural sites. You may come to rely on candles and lanterns in the evenings. Most will have an outside *pila*, but you may

find yourself carrying water from a community water source or collecting rainwater to fill it. In some areas, people use a community *pila* or a river for their water source.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers receive a living allowance adequate to their needs as determined by annual cost-of-living surveys. Volunteers are entirely responsible for managing their personal finances. Living allowances allow Volunteers to live according to the standards of the people with whom they live and work. There are several living allowance categories. They are based on the cost of living in different geographical areas. The principal bank used by Peace Corps/Guatemala is Banco del Quetzal. Upon arrival in Guatemala, each Volunteer must open a personal checking account with this bank and sign a power of attorney authorizing Peace Corps/Guatemala to make deposits for living allowances, reimbursements, etc. to the account. Prior to leaving Guatemala, each Volunteer must personally close the account after ascertaining that all checks have cleared and making the necessary arrangements to cover those that have not. For convenience, Volunteers often open a second account at a bank in or near their site. Funds can then be transferred from the Banco del Quetzal account into the second account.

Food and Diet

Most Volunteers enjoy eating the typical food in their community, often with their neighbors or host families. In towns and cities, you will usually find a greater variety; in poor rural areas, the food choices can be limited. Throughout Guatemala, corn tortillas and black beans are a staple; other common foods include eggs, rice, chicken soup, and bread

brought in from bakeries in larger towns. These types of foods are eaten daily in most poor areas of Guatemala. The most common fruits and vegetables include tomatoes, onions, avocado, a squash called *hwisquil* (chayote in the United States), bananas, and mangoes (when in season). Papaya and citrus are found in some areas. Tamales, chicken or pork, are often prepared as well as a sweet rice or corn drink called *atoll*.

In more developed areas, you might find a greater variety of food, including more meat (most often chicken) and more fruits and vegetables.

Even in the most rural areas, there is likely to be a small local store that stocks snacks, sodas, and staples. Traditional outdoor markets, where you can find fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, clothing, household items, and knickknacks, are held on a regular basis (usually weekly) in central towns and are always open in main cities. In larger cities, you will also find supermarkets, where you can purchase non-perishables and imported goods; in the capital, there is great variety. Some Volunteers take advantage of the opportunity while in town to stock up on special foods and cooking items, such as spices, peanut butter, pasta, or a food that reminds them of home.

Being a vegetarian as a Volunteer is not difficult—in many of the poorer areas, for example, meat is rarely eaten. However, since many Volunteers eat with their neighbors, and meat is prepared on special occasions, there will likely be situations where meat is presented to you. Many Volunteers have successfully served as vegetarians, and you will need to find a way to deal with these situations that is appropriate for you in your circumstances.

Transportation

Guatemala has extensive and relatively cheap transportation among major urban areas and relatively good access in some rural areas. Volunteers often travel around their site for work activities on foot, in the company of other community members or work colleagues. Some Volunteers use bicycles provided by the Peace Corps to travel. If a Volunteer needs a bicycle to facilitate his or her work and the program manager agrees, the Volunteer will be provided with the means to get a bicycle by PC/Guatemala. However, this can be difficult in mountainous areas, and all Volunteers must wear a helmet when riding a bicycle (provided by the Peace Corps).

For longer distances, Volunteers usually ride “chicken buses,” U.S. school buses painted and outfitted with racks to haul supplies, and sometimes animals. In rural areas, you might have a chicken bus that leaves your site once a day, travels to a major city, and returns at night. In other areas, pick-up trucks provide transportation to villages on a regular basis instead of a bus. Sometimes, you might arrange for a ride with someone you know who has a car or pick-up. For long distances on major routes, there are “pullmans,” much like a Greyhound bus, which provide a more comfortable ride for a higher fee. On either kind of bus, you will find that they stop frequently to pick up passengers and are often overcrowded, so you might find yourself sitting three to a seat or standing in the aisle.

Geography and Climate

Guatemala is the northernmost and most populous of the Central American republics. More than 12 million people live in an area about the size of Tennessee or Ohio. Guatemala has coastlines on the Pacific and the Caribbean, and it borders Mexico, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

The central highlands are the most densely populated area. Between the highlands and the Pacific lies a narrow plain. The Caribbean lowlands have fertile river valleys. The north of the country contains tropical jungles and protected biospheres.

Temperatures are fairly constant year-round and are most influenced by elevation. In the cattle country of eastern Guatemala and coastal lowlands, temperatures can reach 100°F. In western Guatemala, which is the highest part of Central America, the climate is cold, and morning temperatures in December and January are frequently below freezing. In the areas of more moderate elevation, the climate is generally milder—cool in the mornings, warm to hot in the afternoons, and then cooling down again at night. Average temperatures would be around 50°F to 70°F. The most noticeable feature of Guatemala's tropical climate is the seasonal alternation between dry and rainy seasons. During May to October, most parts of the country get rain every day, resulting in lush vegetation and cooler temperatures. During the dry season (November to April), rain tapers off and most sections of the country get no rain. This results in dry, dusty weather and hotter temperatures.

Social Activities

There are three prominent aspects of rural social life in Guatemala. The first has to do with the religious celebrations of the community and families. Births, confirmations and coming-of-age ceremonies, communions, marriages, and funerals are themes for the celebration of life. Funerals, in particular, are the recognition of the accomplishments and thoughts of the departed.

The second aspect of social life in rural Guatemala centers on the market, which is far more than a place to buy needed goods. The market is the place to meet and visit with people to exchange news and hold discussions.

The third facet of social life is inter-community competition. Winning a soccer game against a neighboring community, or even losing, creates a sense of solidarity and identity. For most Volunteers, getting involved with sporting events and activities is the easiest way to integrate fully into the community.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

In Guatemala, a Peace Corps Volunteer is expected to be a professional, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to the quality of work. It takes most Volunteers a while to get a sense of what constitutes a reasonable personal workload. Some Volunteers may have a busy schedule of activities set up with their counterparts or host agency. Other Volunteers may be in a less structured environment, where they must get to know their community, find various avenues for work, and develop their own schedule. Because of logistical considerations, some routine tasks may take longer to complete in Guatemala than in the United States.

Appropriate dress is important, since physical appearance makes a personal statement in Guatemala. What constitutes as appropriate dress for work will vary depending on the type of work you will be doing. Your assignment description will provide specific guidelines.

In general, the norm is a conservative, neat appearance. Except in tourist areas and a few locations near the coast, men do not wear shorts or sandals. Pants or jeans with a

clean button-down shirt, polo, or nice T-shirt are common for work and casual wear. Long hair, piercings, or earrings on men are associated with drug dealers and gang members, and thus are not acceptable for Volunteers. Likewise, dreadlocks are not an acceptable hairstyle for Volunteers in Guatemala. You will be expected to adjust your appearance if necessary to accommodate these standards.

Women in Guatemala tend to take pride in their appearance and “dress up.” In indigenous areas, women wear hand-woven traditional dress. In other areas of the country, dress varies depending on the site. In conservative areas and small villages, you are likely to see women wearing mid-length dresses, or a skirt with a blouse or T-shirt. In towns and more modern areas, it is common to see women in pants or jeans, and you might see women dressed in a manner that Americans might consider flashy. Female Volunteers are not expected to adopt traditional dress or dress like the women in their community; however, your attire should reflect your status as a professional. Female Volunteers usually wear dresses, skirts, pants, or jeans, with short-sleeved or modest sleeveless blouses in hotter climates. Shorts, bare shoulders and tank tops should be avoided except while on vacation in tourist areas. For assignments that require a lot of hiking or field work, pants are most appropriate. It is important to note that tight or revealing clothing for women could elicit negative attention. Volunteers are expected to dress conservatively.

Peace Corps has a zero-tolerance policy on the use of illegal drugs, including marijuana. It is illegal in Guatemala, and puts both the safety of the Volunteer and the image of the Peace Corps at great risk. Use of illegal drugs will result in immediate separation from Peace Corps. There are absolutely no exceptions.

Volunteers are “on duty” representing Peace Corps 24-hours a day, seven days a week—even while relaxing on weekends or on vacation. Your use of alcohol, relationships with Guatemalans and other Volunteers, and your general lifestyle are constantly under observation, both within the local community as well as by other Americans who may be in the country as tourists or on private business. It can at times feel like a restriction on your personal liberties. If you do not feel comfortable with this responsibility, and are not willing to make any necessary adjustments to your lifestyle, then it would be best not to accept this invitation to serve.

Peace Corps/Guatemala believes in the commitment of Volunteers to their project, and the organizations and community members with whom they work. Based on this belief, we expect all Volunteers to dedicate their time and efforts to the Guatemalans they have come to serve in their respective project locations. Vacation time should be utilized as a *complement* to your service, not a primary focus. Vacation leave provides Volunteers with the opportunity to increase their understanding of the host country and region, while allowing time for rest and relaxation. Volunteers accrue annual leave at the rate of two days for each month of service. Because Volunteers are deemed to be on duty at all times, all Volunteer leave is computed in terms of calendar days rather than workdays.

Personal Safety

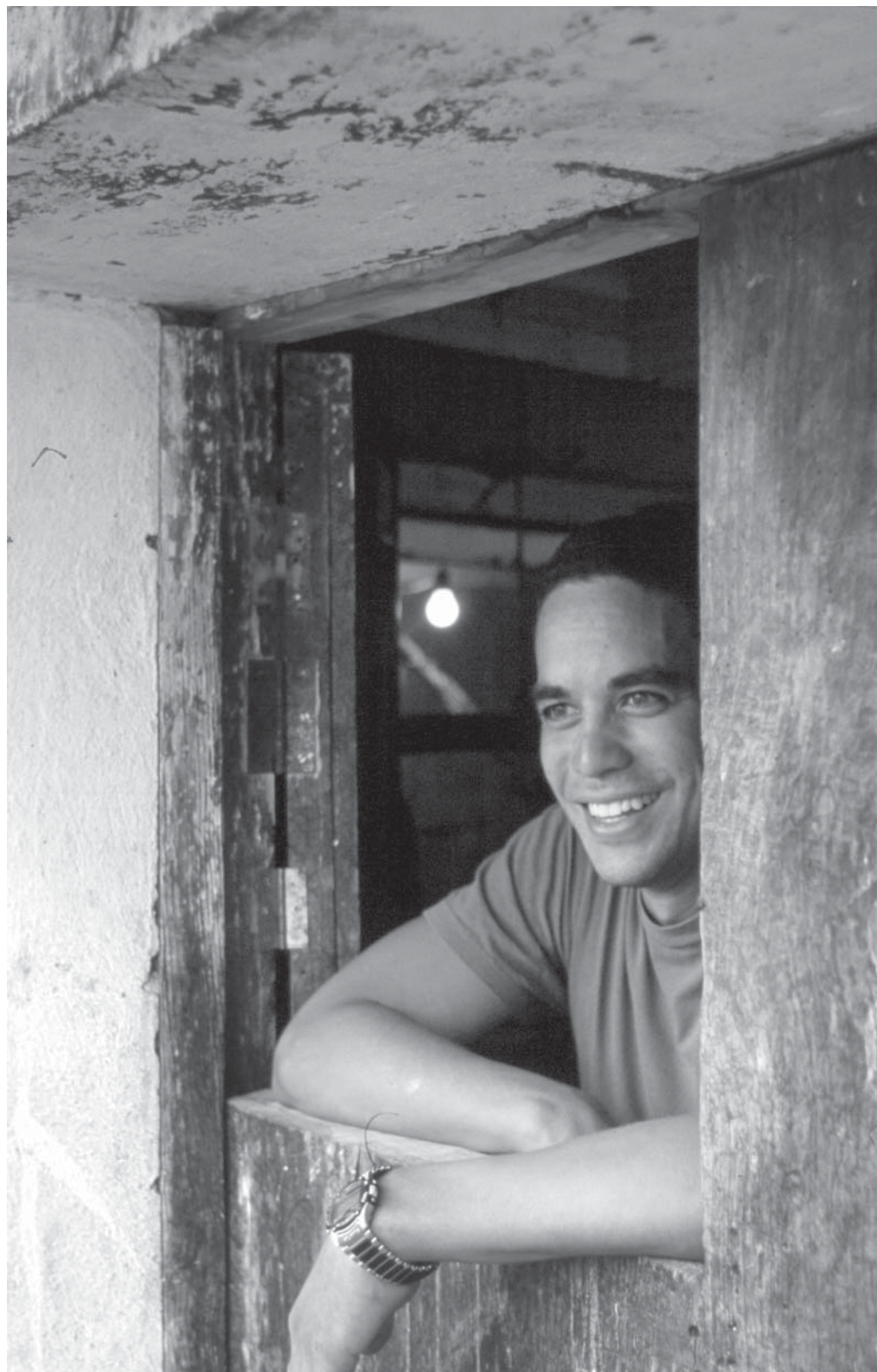
More information about the Peace Corps’ approach to safety is outlined in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be over-emphasized. As stated in the Volunteer Handbook, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, having a limited understanding

of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal safety problems. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help Volunteers reduce their risks and enhance their safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in your country of service. Though the Peace Corps will provide you with training and ongoing support, you are expected to take personal responsibility for your safety and well-being.

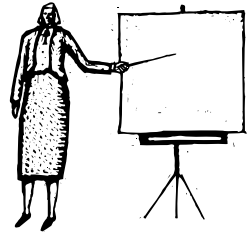
Rewards and Frustrations

Both the rewards and frustrations of service in Guatemala seem to come mostly from the differences between U.S. and Guatemalan culture. In the United States, the culture emphasizes “action” or “doing,” in which a person’s value to society is assessed primarily in terms of what he or she is able to achieve over the course of someone’s lifetime. In Guatemala, the culture emphasizes “being,” where social value is a function of affiliation and group solidarity. Some Volunteers have a difficult time appreciating the importance of simply spending time with associates and community members to establish confidence based on interpersonal relationships. Most agencies to which Volunteers are assigned have little cultural understanding of the U.S. ethic of volunteerism, and they may have a limited understanding of what kind of support and supervision Volunteers need to feel productive. The rewards, particularly for “self-starters” with high energy, are ample opportunities to make a measurable difference in the lives of the people one serves.

NOTES



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

The training center is located in Santa Lucia Milpas Altas in the department of Sacatepequez. This is a small town settled along the road that runs between Antigua and Guatemala City. You will participate in a 12-week community-based training that consists of a variety of hands-on activities to help you develop and practice the skills you will need as a Volunteer. Our training philosophy can be summed up in the phrase: Learning by doing. There will be some classroom work and some readings, but most of the training will be hands-on in your training community, using methods and materials available to the people and communities with whom you will be working.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in Guatemala by building on the skills you already have and helping you to develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. Peace Corps staff, Guatemalan experts, and current Volunteers conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on general environmental, economic, and political situations in Guatemala and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Guatemalan agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated by the training staff throughout the pre-service training to build the confidence and skills you will need to undertake

your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, will help you integrate into your host community, and ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements in order to complete training and become a Volunteer.

Experienced Guatemalan language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small classes of four to five people. The Guatemalan language is also introduced in the health, culture, and technical components of training.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. You will have classroom time and will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family to learn the language. Our goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills more thoroughly once you are at your site. Prior to swearing in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Guatemalan host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition into life in your site. Families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Guatemala. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development will be covered to help improve your skills of perception, communication, and facilitation. Topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, and traditional and political structures are also addressed.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. As a trainee, you are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that Volunteers may encounter while in Guatemala. Sexual health and harassment, nutrition, mental health, and safety issues are also covered.

Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

Additional Trainings during Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides trainees and Volunteers with continuous opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During your service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Mid-term conference (Done in conjunction with technical sector in-service)*: Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and to review Volunteers' respective projects and personal experiences.

The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

NOTES



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN GUATEMALA



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative approach to disease. Peace Corps/Guatemala maintains a medical office with two full-time American nurses to take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. A Guatemalan physician is available for consultation several hours each working day. Additional medical services, such as laboratories and specialized physicians, are also available in Guatemala City at local, American-standard hospitals.

Health Issues in Guatemala

Outside of major cities, the healthcare infrastructure is based mainly on rural clinics, supported by some hospitals. There are excellent air ambulance services in case of emergencies. The role of clinics, other than diagnosing endemic health problems and coordinating the training of midwives, is to refer complicated cases to service providers in the larger cities. Maladies associated with poverty such as malnutrition, water- and food-borne illnesses, tuberculosis, and parasitic infestations are fairly common. Malaria, dengue fever, and Chagas disease are also present. Most health problems in Guatemala can be avoided by consistently using preventive measures.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy upon your arrival in Guatemala. You will receive nine training

sessions devoted exclusively to health and safety, and you will be given written materials and other references. During training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this booklet.

During training, you will have access to basic first-aid supplies and many over-the-counter medications through the medical office. You, however, will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require during pre-service training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, including contraceptives, as they may not be available here and it may take several months to order them from the U.S. and for new shipments to arrive.

You will have routine physical examinations, including lab work, at mid-service and at the end of your service. The majority of your medical issues during service will be managed by the medical officers or the approved medical providers in the interior of the country as needed. If you develop a particularly serious medical problem during your service, the medical officers in Guatemala may consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Guatemala, you may be sent to either Panama or the U.S. for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” becomes extremely important in rural areas where medical diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to

the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Guatemala include taking preventive measures for the following:

- Compliance with malaria chemoprophylaxis. Failure to take malaria prophylaxis may result in significant illness and possible termination of service.
- In all bites from warm-blooded animals, you should assume the animal is rabid, inform the medical officer, and come into the office for rabies prophylaxis.
- If sexually active, comply with safe-sex practices, including the use of condoms for all sexual activity.
- Use an effective method of contraception if sexually active.
- Do not wait until a medical problem becomes critical before seeking treatment.
- Adhere to food and water preparation practices.
- Understand and follow Peace Corps policies relating to drug use (zero tolerance) and alcohol consumption (use in moderation)

It is critical for your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, lab work, or other specialist appointments, and that you let your medical officer know immediately of significant illness and injuries.

Many health problems that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These problems include food poisoning, amebiasis, giardiasis, hepatitis A, dysentery, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation for Guatemala during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk,

use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from your medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

Women's Health Information

Pregnancy is a health condition that is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions requiring medical attention, but may also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is extremely rare that the Peace Corps medical and programmatic standards for continued service can be met here in Guatemala.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a medical kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that might occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at your Peace Corps medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

First Aid and Personal Safety Manual

Ace bandage
Acetaminophen: 325mg tablets
Adhesive tape
Antacid tablets
Anti-fungal cream
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B ointment
Band-Aids
Bismuth Subsalicylate tablets
Butterfly closures
Cepacol lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL (Benadryl): 25 mg tablets
Gloves, non-sterile, disposable, 1 pair
Hydrocortisone Cream 1%, 30 mg tube
Ibuprofen: 400mg tablets
Insect repellent
Iodine tablets (Water purification tablets)
Lip balm
Oral rehydration salts
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL (Sudafed): 30 mg tablets
Robitussin-DM lozenges
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Sunscreen Cream 30 SPF
Tetrahydrozoline eye drops (Visine)
Tweezers
Whistle

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since the time you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records.

If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid taking duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, including childhood Immunizations, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this, we will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace

Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, although it might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about your on-hand three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. Volunteers may find it difficult to use contact lenses during service, as some Peace Corps sites do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will *not* supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless their use has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval. If you decide to bring contact lenses with you, please also bring eyeglasses in case you are unable to use the contacts.

If you are eligible for Medicare, over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age and/or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 85 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2006 Peace Corps Volunteer survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2006, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings).
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 11:00 p.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 73 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 48 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Fourteen (14) percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers. Twenty-six (26) percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a “dummy” wallet as a decoy

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk

- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

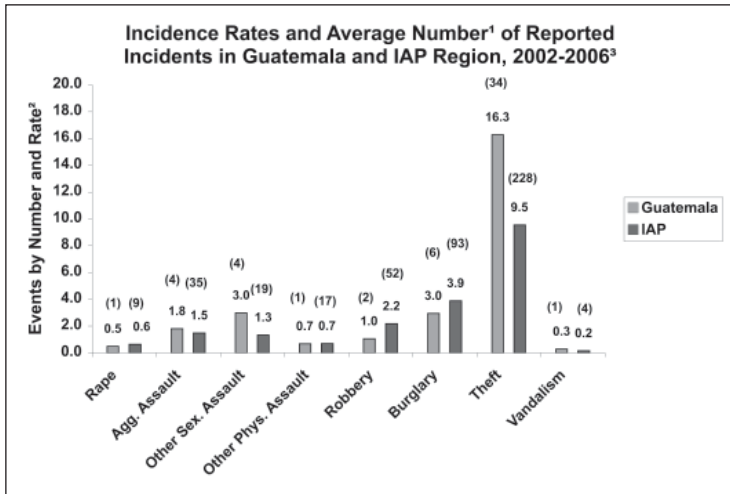
The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Guatemala as compared to all other Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) region programs as a whole, from 2002 to 2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

²Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for Panama began as of 2002; due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Sexual Assaults are termed Other Sexual Assault and Other Physical Assault per CIRF definitions as of the year 2006. Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault Assault and Minor Physical Assault per ANSS definitions.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 09/13/07.

months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps’ classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of

property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); other physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); other sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with

the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer or the safety and security coordinator. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors, medical officers, and safety and security coordinator are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov.

Security Issues in Guatemala

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Guatemala. You can reduce your risk of becoming a target for crime by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking advanced precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions, especially in large towns, are the favorite work sites for pickpockets. The following are safety concerns in Guatemala of which you should be aware:

- The percentage of the population that is armed is high due to the carryover from the civil war that ended in 1996.
- In villages and small towns, citizens frequently take the law into their own hands, dispensing summary justice. If you are even suspected of posing a threat to public safety, the consequences can be potentially dangerous.
- Try to keep non-essential travel to a minimum.
- Do not resist robbers. Nothing you own is worth being injured or killed over.
- Avoid being out after dark.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on the responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Guatemala, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: be cautious,

check things out, ask a lot of questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by the Peace Corps' policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Guatemala may require that you accept some restrictions to your current lifestyle.

Volunteers are normally more at risk of crime while in large cities; in smaller towns, your new “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for “their” Volunteers. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and don't respond to such negative and unwanted attention. In general, keep your money out of sight—use an undergarment money pouch, such as the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. If you walk at night, you should always be with a companion.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Guatemala

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: information sharing; Volunteer training; site selection criteria; a detailed emergency action plan; and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. Guatemala's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Guatemala office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be offered

in Volunteer newsletters and in memoranda from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

Volunteer training will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in Guatemala. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout your two-year service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. Peace Corps staff work closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for the Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective role in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection criteria are based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other support needs.

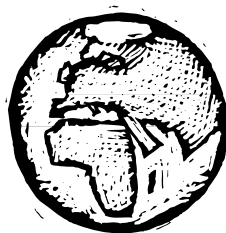
You will also learn about the country's detailed **emergency action plan**, in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Guatemala will gather at pre-determined locations until the situation resolves itself or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps medical officer and/or the on-call Peace Corps/Guatemala duty officer. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner. In addition to responding to the needs of the Volunteer, the Peace Corps collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race, and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other, despite our many differences. Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal.

In other ways, however, our diversity poses challenges. In Guatemala, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics considered familiar and commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed.

Outside of Guatemala's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What is advertised as "typical" cultural behavior or norms may also be a narrow and selective interpretation, such as the perception in some countries that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Guatemala are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to differences that you present. We will ask you to be supportive of one another.

In order to ease the transition and adapt to life in Guatemala, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises with who you are as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions will need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limits. Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during your pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in Guatemala

Peace Corps staff in Guatemala recognizes the adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups, and ages and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who will take pride in supporting each other and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

In the past, Peace Corps/Guatemala has had an active Diversity Network. The Diversity Network has worked with several goals, including instituting a buddy system to match new Volunteers who may have some very specific concerns or questions they would like to discuss with an experienced Volunteer. The Diversity Network is designed to assist with training and will be assigned a direct liaison with Peace Corps staff to discuss issues related to improving staff support to Volunteers. This Volunteer-led committee is not currently as

active as in recent years, but Peace Corps/Guatemala staff is available and enthusiastic to support its revival if there is Volunteer interest.

What Might A Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

In rural Guatemala, there is a genuine division between the roles of women and those of men. The degree of separation frequently leads people to rely on stereotypical beliefs about people of the opposite sex—men, with respect to women and vice versa. This dependence upon stereotypical images lends itself to the dehumanization of relations between men and women and to a situation in which people are viewed as objects. Unfortunately, the image of American women portrayed in popular television programs suggests that they are sexually available. Additionally, in some regions of Guatemala, male virility is identified with power and social dominance. Some female Volunteers find the numerous sexually explicit invitations they receive to be intolerably offensive. However, during Pre-Service Training Peace Corps/Guatemala staff and Volunteers will help trainees develop strategies to deal with these issues.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

The dynamic of racism does not play out in Guatemala in quite the same way as it does in the United States. The first identification of the Volunteer is as a *gringo*, an identification that is a mixture of proportions of admiration and resentment that vary from person to person. *Gringos* are typically thought of as being of Caucasian descent, rich, and sometimes overbearing. Therefore, Volunteers of color are often not initially viewed as *gringos* or even American. Stereotypically, all Asian Americans are described as *chino* and sometimes are

assumed to be associated with the Korean clothing industry present in Guatemala. African Americans are called *moreno* or *negro* and often are thought to be *Garifuna*, a Guatemalan ethnic group primarily populating the Caribbean coast. Volunteers of Latin and Southeast Asian descent are often assumed to be Guatemalan. Conversations with Guatemalans regarding one's ethnicity and heritage are numerous, sometimes to the point of being annoying. However, this allows Volunteers the opportunity to educate host country nationals about the true nature of American diversity. Without a doubt, Volunteers of color have positive, rich and successful Peace Corps experiences in Guatemala.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Senior Volunteers may feel that they have successfully resolved many challenges of holding down a job, establishing relationships, and perhaps even raising a family. In Guatemala, they might find that the “big questions” to which they have the “answers” are different from the ones in the United States. Also, learning a second language is tough at any age. Some senior Volunteers have expressed that it may take a little longer than it might have when they were younger. In Guatemala, seniors are treated with great respect, but they are also viewed as being outside of the economic mainstream. Senior Volunteers working in a host country agency sometimes face the double stigma of being “older” and being a *gringo*.

Volunteer Comment

“Guatemala is a country where most of the population is less than 20 years old. Babies, toddlers, and young children seem to be almost everywhere. A person in their 40s in a rural community is traditionally considered to be an ‘elder,’ and tends to be afforded a good deal of deference

and respect. Senior Volunteers will often find themselves adopted as 'honorary grandparents' for much of the community.

On the other hand, most young villagers believe that elders are no longer interested, or able to play a role in the work of the community or village. However, with a sense of humor you can figure out how far you can go in offering advice and suggestions. Learning Spanish is hard work, but if you keep trying, it will come. In the meantime, the few words you know, along with gestures and a smile, will go a long way.

Routine medical care in the capital is good and the Peace Corps' medical staff is outstanding. Living out in the countryside is a little more complicated, but on my trips into the capital I stock up on items I can't buy at home. Getting around is always an adventure, and public transportation is very inexpensive."

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

In Guatemala, the common conception of homosexuality is different than that in the United States. Homosexuals are commonly thought to be gay men (not women) who dress in women's clothes and are often prostitutes. If one doesn't fit into this category, they are generally assumed to be heterosexual. However, homosexual relationships are considered by many to be taboo and could provoke serious reactions in rural communities. For Volunteers, there may be pressure to live more "in" than "out," especially in rural communities, despite having been "out" in the United States.

Lesbians will have to deal with constant questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex (as do all women). Gay men must deal with machismo: talk of conquest(s), girl watching, and dirty jokes.

Most tourist destinations have a more relaxed attitude, and discrete homosexuality is less likely to provoke as severe a reaction as in village communities.

Despite generally negative perceptions of homosexuality within Guatemala, there are openly gay Guatemalans, as well as numerous gay organizations and businesses that cater to the gay population, especially in the capital. In addition, Peace Corps/Guatemala had as part of the Diversity Network an affinity group called *Cuates* (friends) that periodically organized social outings for gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers and friends. Peace Corps/Guatemala staff is available and enthusiastic to support Volunteers' initiative in renewing this group.

Volunteer Comment

“Guatemala has many contrasts. The perspective toward homosexuality is one of them. Although in most areas the issue of homosexuality is negatively viewed, there are stark differences in how one manages life as a gay Volunteer. In the *Oriente* (east), one has to deal with rampant sexist and homophobic jokes, while in the *Antiplano* (highlands) the Mayan culture has traditionally been more tolerant, at least overtly. Still, in the *Antiplano* one has to manage other issues. With patience, professionalism, and humor virtually all issues related to homosexuality can be assuaged.

Like everywhere, gay folks have managed to find their niche in Guatemalan society. This tends to be most lively in the capital and in tourist areas. Although living a closeted life in rural Guatemala can sometimes be lonely, there are always other Volunteers, foreigners, and Guatemalans to provide a necessary social outlet.”

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Guatemala is a profoundly religious country where religion is public and emotional. For Volunteers used to a more contemplative or low-key religious tradition, it may be a challenge to identify other people who can support your faith. Although Guatemala's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, almost all churches are either Roman Catholic or Christian Fundamentalist. In the tension between Catholics and Fundamentalists, there is little recognition of other faith communities, including Mayan religious practices. Many Guatemalans remain uninformed about Judaism and may have negative attitudes. Managing a conversation can be delicate and some Volunteers have had difficulty being open about their Jewish ethnicity. There is, however, a rich history of Jews in Guatemala and an active Jewish community that welcomes foreigners. There are also Hindu and Muslim communities in Guatemala. Peace Corps/Guatemala staff can provide information to Volunteers who are interested in connecting to various communities of faith.

Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

In the wake of 36 years of civil war, there are a number of people with permanent disabilities. However, there is virtually no consideration for handicap access in public transportation or in public buildings.

The Peace Corps Office of Medical Services, as part of the medical clearance process, determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of performing a full tour of Volunteer service in Guatemala without unreasonable risk to yourself or interruption of your service. Peace Corps/Guatemala staff work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, job sites, and other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Married couples may face unique challenges in Guatemala. For instance, a married man may be encouraged to be the more dominant member in the relationship. He may also be encouraged by the local culture to make decisions independent of his spouse's views and to have his wife serve him. He may be ridiculed if he performs domestic tasks. On the other hand, a married woman may find herself in a less independent role than that to which she has been accustomed. She may also experience a more limited social life in the community than single Volunteers (since it may be assumed that she will be busy taking care of her husband). Additionally, she may be expected by the local culture to perform "traditional" domestic chores such as cooking or cleaning. Competition between a couple may become a difficulty, especially if one spouse learns faster than the other (e.g., language skills, job skills). There also may be differences in job satisfaction and/or different needs between spouses. Younger Volunteers may look to couples for advice and support. Married couples also are likely to be treated with more respect because the community sees marriage as a responsibility. They may be asked when they will have children.

Please note: Married couples will likely not live together during the three months of pre-service training (PST). The community-based training model locates trainees in communities based on their technical program and Spanish level. Special considerations are given to couples so that they live in nearby communities, and they will have more flexibility to see each other. Language acquisition and cultural integration increase when each one of the couple has a separate host family. During PST the couple will spend a week together visiting the new site in which they will serve together for the two years of their Volunteer service. During that week they will get to know their counterparts and eventual work and to look for housing together.

NOTES



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage will I be allowed to bring to Guatemala?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limitations, and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limitations. Checked baggage (2 pieces) should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 50 pounds for any one bag. The combined linear dimensions (length + width + height) of your checked baggage may not exceed 107 inches. The larger piece of checked baggage may not exceed 62 inches. Your carry-on baggage may not exceed a total linear measurement of 45 inches.

Peace Corps will guarantee the transportation of two pieces of checked baggage weighing no more than 80 pounds total. This policy does not mean that you aren't allowed more than 80 pounds of luggage, but that you will be responsible for any potential charges for amounts over that weight. Questions about baggage limits should be directed to the particular domestic and international airlines on which you will be traveling. The Peace Corps recommends that you do not bring more than you can carry. You will be responsible for handling your luggage en route to post and overseas.

If you exceed an airline's baggage limits, you may be assessed a fee. However, if your luggage conforms to the parameters stated above, the Peace Corps will reimburse you for fees incurred for which you have a valid receipt.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radio receivers are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their

overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

What is the electric current in Guatemala?

Electric current is the U.S. standard 110 volts.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel. Credit cards and travelers checks are preferable to cash. There are ATMs in a growing number of locations in Guatemala and some of them accept U.S. ATM cards, though usually with a fee. If you choose to bring extra money, plan on bringing the amount that suits your own personal travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. You must discuss this with the program director prior to their arrival. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. However, such insurance can be purchased before you leave. Ultimately, Volunteers are responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms are included in your invitation package, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Additional information about insurance should be obtained by calling the company directly.

Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?

Volunteers in Guatemala do not need to get an international driver's license. Operation of privately owned vehicles is prohibited. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. In rural areas, people travel by bus, truck, or on foot. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this is only with prior written permission of the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. Your U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for Guatemala friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include: knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; small inexpensive toys for children; or photos to give away. Photos of your family are also great conversation pieces.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed their pre-service training. This gives the Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's specific technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, or living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you might ideally like to be. Most Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages, but will usually be within one hour from the nearest Volunteer. Some sites will require a 10- to 12-hour drive from the capital. There are numerous Volunteers in regional capitals and municipal seats.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the 24-hour telephone number for the Office of Special Services is 1.800.424.8580, extension 1470.

For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 202.692.2521 or 2520.

Can I call home from Guatemala?

Making long-distance international calls usually involves buying a special pre-paid telephone card and finding a

telephone that will accept it. Many larger towns have small businesses that place international calls for 30 cents to 40 cents a minute. Also, some cell phone companies in-country offer good rates. Most Volunteers use the Internet for non-emergency international communications.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

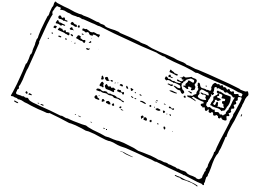
Cellular phones are being used by 100 percent of Volunteers. Rather than bring a cellular phone into Guatemala, it is cheaper to buy one in-country. Some of the cellular service providers also lease handsets, which ensure compatibility of programming. Cellular service is filling the gaps in Guatemala's communications infrastructure, but there are still areas of the country with poor or no coverage. The best tactic is to wait until you have your site assignment, and then subscribe to the cellular service provider that works best in your site. Most trainees also get a cell phone.

Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

E-mail and Internet access is typically limited to larger towns and tourist destinations, but is surprisingly available in many Volunteer sites. Bringing a desktop workstation would obviously not be a good idea. It poses a security risk since laptops bring a good price in the local markets for stolen goods. Volunteers who choose to bring their laptops generally use them to create documents for work-related purposes. Do not expect to use your laptop for Internet access. The best option would be to bring a palm-pilot type device with an adapter cable that would allow you to download work in one of the country's many cybercafés. Peace Corps cannot reimburse Volunteers for damage or theft to laptops and advises that bringing one is at the risk of the owner.



WELCOME LETTER FROM GUATEMALA VOLUNTEERS



The following is a compilation of comments from several Volunteers currently serving in Guatemala:

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Congratulations and welcome to Peace Corps/Guatemala! Believe it or not, now that your application has been accepted, you have been medically cleared and invited to serve in Guatemala, **THE HARD PART IS OVER!** Now the adventure and fun can begin! Guatemala is an amazing place to serve as a Volunteer. You should feel fortunate to have been assigned to work in the “land of eternal spring.” Guatemala is a country rich in natural beauty and culture that you will soon explore. The people are gracious and eager to work with Volunteers while opening their minds and hearts to a new friend.

Having recently completed one year of service as a Volunteer, I look back on those 12 months and feel blessed to have spent one of the best years of my life with great friends and challenging work, which has enabled me to grow personally and professionally. For all the goals and expectations that I had prior to beginning service, it has been what I didn’t expect and didn’t plan for that has taught me the most. As you begin your life as a Peace Corps Volunteer, remember to be flexible, open minded, and patient.

Opportunities will abound in Peace Corps, and I hope you are prepared to use this time to grow as a professional, leader, and friend. The single greatest opportunity presented to you as a Volunteer is to serve your country and the people of Guatemala in a unique and life-altering way. Like almost 4,500 Volunteers before you, you will leave your mark on Guatemala and it will most certainly leave a mark on you. I look forward to personally welcoming you to this country along with your new extended family of more than 150 Volunteers.

Cordially,

— Kyri Green

Dear future Peace Corps/Guatemala Volunteers,

Welcome to Guatemala! You are about to discover a diverse country in which rapid development and traditional ways of life interact richly to produce the Guatemalan culture. In your time here, you will experience the lifestyles of both Mayan and Ladino Guatemalans. You will hike spectacular volcanic topography and stroll through bustling regional markets. And you will meet people you will never forget.

Over the last 100 years, the population of Guatemala has ballooned from under a million to around 13 million, creating widespread and extreme poverty. Our work as Peace Corps Volunteers is to reach out to the rural poor, using our technical skills and influence to design and implement programs that reduce poverty. Whether working in health, education, business development, or agroforestry, we work directly with the rural poor. Often, a little motivation and coordination from a Volunteer is all that is needed for a village to get organized and take the first steps toward meeting its basic needs.

In spite of the pace of development all around Guatemala, many Volunteers get discouraged because our work doesn't produce immediate results. In two years, you will give many trainings and organize local groups. Maybe you will leave behind tree plantations or new businesses. As Peace Corps Volunteers, we plant our seeds and go before seeing them flower. Don't get discouraged! Work hard to leave behind well-trained people in your community, and know that progress will eventually bloom.

Take advantage of training in Spanish and in Mayan languages so that you will be able to begin work as soon as you enter your site. Read extensively about your technical area so that you will be able to give useful advice. But more important than anything else, be determined and positive—how else could you overcome the barriers that have kept communities in poverty for so long? You are the next generation of Peace Corps Volunteers, and now it is your turn to make life more livable for the rural poor in Guatemala.

— B. Whitehurst

I woke up this morning to the sounds of roosters, my neighbor singing evangelical hymns, and buses racing in and out of town. Today is market day. After dressing and eating breakfast, I head out the door and walk five blocks to catch my bus, saying hello to about 20 people along the way. As I weave through the street, dodging carts piled with fresh produce and street dogs looking for their next meal, I reflect on the first time I went to market. All the sounds, smells, and noises were so overwhelming, and they made me feel faint. Now I pushed my way through with confidence and purpose.

I wait for the bus for 45 minutes, not really knowing if it had already come and gone or if it was just late. Today I'm lucky because it shows up right before I go to look for a pick-up truck.

When I finally arrive at school the students greet me by applauding, whispering to each other, or simply yelling my name. "¡Seño Erin está aquí!" This is their response every single week and it makes me feel wonderfully warm because their excitement is so genuine. This is why I'm a million miles away from my friends and family.

During recess all the teachers and I meet to discuss plans for a hand-washing station we plan on constructing within the next few months. We talk about resources in the community and where to look for funds in the city of Tecpán. Our meeting ends with the bell and each of us making sure our students brush their teeth before classes start again.

At 1:00 I arrive into town passing by Doña Pancha's house. She coaxes me in with promises of lunch. Who am I to turn down Doña Pancha's famous fried chicken and beet salad? Small kids rush me and I scoop them up while Don Carlos talks to me about the state of Guatemala and I'm fed tortilla after tortilla.

Finally I get home and it starts to rain. I have every intention of cleaning my kitchen, but my bed is calling my name so I read and nap for an hour instead. As I drift back into consciousness, I think of all the things I need to do this weekend: make posters for my nutrition workshop, stop by the post office to see if Luis has my weekly letter

from Grandma, wash clothes, and buy a wedding gift for my Kaqchikel teacher and her fiancé. But these things will wait because I'm never pressed for time in Guatemala and the book I'm reading is hard to put down.

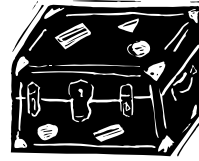
My friend Betty stops by and we eat dinner and drink tea. We look through the newer issues of trashy magazines that I just got sent in a package and gossip mindlessly about movie stars we don't care about. After Betty takes her last bus home, I clean up and slide into bed wondering what tomorrow will bring. Tomorrow could feel lonely or scary or happy or wonderful. All I know is that today was good. Today was market day.

— Erin Treinen

NOTES



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Guatemala and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. In addition, the climate in Guatemala varies greatly from cold to hot. The training center in Santa Lucia Milpas Altas (near Antigua) is at high altitude. Therefore it can be very cold at night and in the training rooms during the morning hours. It can be quite cold for the training group that arrives in January, and quite rainy for the other two groups that arrive later in the calendar year. It is important to keep this in mind while packing and be sure to pack accordingly (think layers!).

There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Guatemala.

Clothes

General Clothing

- One to two pairs nice pants (lightweight that dry quickly can be helpful)
- Two to four pairs work pants or jeans
- Four T-shirts or short-sleeve polo shirts
- Two to three blouses or dress shirts
- Two-week supply of cotton underwear and socks
- One pair long underwear

- One to two medium-weight sweaters/sweatshirts
- One medium-weight jacket or fleece
- One raincoat (rain pants are optional and advised by some)

For Men

- A tie, one or two nice dress shirts and a sport coat (optional) for formal occasions

For Women

- Two casual and one dress-up dresses
- One to two “going-out” outfits

Other Clothing Items

- Belt
- Handkerchiefs
- Running or athletic gear (if you are into sports)
- A bathing suit
- Two hats (sun hats, visors, or caps with bill)
- One stocking cap (for colder weather)
- One pair of lightweight gloves
- Sunglasses

Note: The general characteristics for clothes are sturdy, easily washable, iron-free (if possible), and conservative. Bring what you are comfortable wearing; things you might wear on a weekend in the States. You do not need to change your whole style because you are a Volunteer. Good quality, used clothes are available in many Guatemalan markets or stores (called *Ropa Americana*). Additionally, many Volunteers have noted their work requires business casual for special meetings or events. As one Volunteer noted: “Although many items on this list may seem like it, you are not preparing for a two-year camping trip, nor do you need to.”

Other Items

Shoes

- One or two pairs of sturdy, walking tennis/cross-training shoes (waterproof tennis shoes are preferable)
- One pair of hiking boots or waterproof shoes
- One to two pairs comfortable casual/dress shoes
- One pair sport and one pair dress sandals
- One pair shower flip-flops
- One pair farm/mud boots (for agriculture Volunteers)

Note: The overall selection and quality of shoes in Guatemala is more limited than the United States. It is difficult to find women's shoes larger than size 9 and men's shoes larger than size 10. If you have larger feet, you may want to consider a plan for getting extra shoes once the ones you bring wear out (e.g., bringing a two-year supply, having people bring you shoes when they come to visit, or arranging for people to send them to you).

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Your regular hygiene items (e.g., soap, shampoo, shaving cream, etc.) to get you started (replacements/refills are easily bought here)
- Three-month supply of prescription medicine
- Extra pair of prescription glasses

Note: Peace Corps nurses will supply you with over-the-counter medicines such as vitamins, painkillers, cold medicines, Tampax-brand tampons, etc. (As an alternative to tampons for female volunteers, a reusable feminine cup called a "Diva Cup" or "The Keeper" is increasingly popular. (Some Volunteers have found this product very convenient considering travel, access to public bathrooms, and disposal of trash at site.)

Miscellaneous

- One set of flat sheets and pillow cases for a full bed
- One bath towel (quick-dry towels are convenient for travel)
- Flashlight (headlamps are popular)
- Sturdy backpack/duffel bag for three- or four-day trips
- Day pack/small backpack
- Watch (fairly cheap and water-resistant/proof)
- Small travel alarm clock
- Money belt (if you prefer using one; wallets are also fine here)
- One sturdy water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Pocketknife (basic knife, corkscrew, screwdriver model is very handy; e.g., Leatherman)
- Shortwave radio (can be bought here)
- Start-up supply of stationery, pens, journal, etc.
- Light sleeping bag and sleeping pad (e.g., Thermarest)
- Digital camera (you may want to bring a few blank CDs to transfer your photos during training. They are much cheaper in the States. Film developing is also easily accessible in the larger cities)
- Photos of family, friends, and home (Guatemalans will love to see your photos)
- Decks of cards and favorite board games
- Small sewing kit
- Travel guide to Guatemala
- Music (iPods and Discmans are popular; bringing travel-size speakers is a good idea if you are bringing audio equipment; and CDs are sold in every market at very cheap prices)

- Small, basic cookbook/favorite recipes (Peace Corps/Guatemala also sells *Que Rico!* a cookbook of Volunteer-compiled recipes that are easily prepared with common items sold at markets)
- Duct tape
- Instrument (if you play one)
- Comfort foods (favorite snack foods)
- USB storage stick (easy to use and hardier than disks for saving important documents)



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list is not all inclusive of everything you should make arrangements for.

Family

- Notify family that they should call Peace Corps' Office of Special Services any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 1.800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- Give Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* booklet to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan on traveling longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to take a six-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are presently taking.

Health Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. Many times if there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage it is difficult and expensive to be reinstated for insurance. This is especially true when insurance companies know you have predictable expenses and are in an upper age bracket.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage.

Personal Papers

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

Voting

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

Personal Effects

- Purchase personal articles insurance for the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

Financial Management

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of legal and financial issues, your property, and business.
- Arrange for deductions from readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 1.800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers, mortgages, deeds, documents, stocks, and bonds in a safe deposit box, with attorney, or with caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



Please use the following list of numbers to help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

1-800-424-8580, Press 2, then
Ext. # (see below)

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Inter-America and the Pacific	Ext. 1835	202.692.1835
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: guatemala@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2520	202.692.2520
	Desk Assistant E-mail: guatemala@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2521	202.692.2521

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)

PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

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