



Guatemala Travel and Packing Information

COUNTRY MAP



Capital: Guatemala City / **Population:** 13+ million / **Area:** 42,043 sq. miles
Language: Spanish, Q'eqchi / **Government:** Constitutional Democratic Republic
Neighboring Countries: Mexico, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador



International Airport:
Guatemala: La Aurora Airport (GUA)

Area of CHOICE Focus: State of Alta Verapaz (Chulac Region of Polochic Valley)

Volunteers participating in CHOICE Expeditions will arrive in Guatemala City (La Aurora International Airport - GUA) and depart from Guatemala City (unless indicated otherwise). Expeditions take place in the rural villages of the Polochic region with increasing elevations between 3,200 - 3,800 feet above sea level. Frequent expedition projects include the construction of regional schoolhouses, health clinics, and water systems. You are invited to join CHOICE in building people, not just projects!

TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

PASSPORT

A valid international passport is required for all volunteers traveling to Guatemala. Your passport must be valid for at least **6 months BEYOND** the date of the international return airline ticket.

VISA

A travel visa is not required for US citizens visiting Guatemala. However, citizens of other countries might require a travel visa to enter Guatemala. Please consult international embassies and/or consulates for further information. **If traveling to other nations in transit to/from Guatemala (including connections), you are responsible for researching the proper passport and visa requirements to avoid immigration problems and issues.**

TAXES

In most cases, international airline tickets often include the arrival taxes and fees for Guatemala. However, please consult with the airline and/or travel agent to be sure. These charges are subject to modification. **Upon departure from Ecuador, a required airport tax could be charged: approx \$30 per person depending on the airport. However, most international airline tickets now include these taxes, so please consult with the airline and/or travel agent to be sure. These charges are subject to modification.**

VACCINES & IMMUNIZATIONS

There are no vaccination requirements for US citizens to enter Guatemala according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. However, citizens of other countries might have distinct requirements and are therefore encouraged to consult international embassies and/or consulates for further information.

CHOICE recommends that all volunteers be up-to-date with routine vaccinations (MMR, DPT, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Typhoid). CHOICE suggests that each volunteer consult with an international travel clinic for professional medical advice regarding travel vaccines and immunizations. For the most benefit, please see a health-care provider at least 4-6 weeks prior to departure for vaccines to take full effect.

Although yellow fever is not a disease risk in Guatemala, the local government requires travelers arriving from countries where yellow fever is present to have proof of yellow fever vaccination. Therefore, please consider your comprehensive travel plans when consulting a health-care provider for those vaccines required across multiple countries and destinations.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

CURRENCY

Guatemalan Quetzal (GTQ)

1.00 US Dollar = 7.71 *Quetzales*

Exchange rate could change; please look up current exchange rate before departure.

ELECTRICITY

110-120 volts AC (60 Hertz)

Plugs: standard 2-prong (same as United States)

WEATHER

“DRY” SEASON: November – April (hot in the afternoons, cooler in the evenings)

**rain is occasional*

HIGH: 85°F – 90°F / LOW: 60°F – 65°F

RAINY SEASON: May – October (hot and humid in the afternoons, cooler and damp in the evenings)

**rain is frequent (downpours in the evening)*

HIGH: 80°F – 85°F / LOW: 55°F – 60°F

FOOD

During the expedition, CHOICE will provide 3 daily meals to all volunteers while in the village. The local diet consists of tortillas, beans, rice, and vegetables. Expedition participants can expect to eat standard American foods combined with local elements: cereals, breads, salads, soups, chicken, fruits, salsas, etc. CHOICE will also provide drinks such as milk, fruit juices, and soda pop. Participants are encouraged to bring personal food and snacks that will not be available in the villages (supplement bars, sweets, etc). Drinkable water will be provided in the village. We encourage each participant to bring a reusable water bottle.

PACKING LIST

This comprehensive packing list has been prepared as a convenience. The recommendations reflect the experience of CHOICE as well as recommendations from previous expedition participants. If you have questions about anything on the packing list, feel free to ask the Expedition Staff, the Expedition Leaders, or post a question in the expedition Facebook group.

When reviewing this list, please **refer to the weather information provided above to coordinate which items to pack and take on a specific expedition (according to the month/season)**. CHOICE recommends that all volunteers check the weather forecast prior to departure to ensure appropriate packing. It is wise to think in LAYERS when preparing for a service trip abroad. **Unless directed otherwise, all volunteers are expected to bring a comfortable sleeping bag and foam pad (inflatable air mattresses optional)**

CHOICE recommends that all volunteers pack as light as possible (since brief hikes might be required before entering and/or departing from the village). CHOICE also suggests duffle bags and camping backpacks as ideal packing equipment (instead of suitcases). **Please check with the airlines regarding luggage allowances and excess baggage fees. CHOICE will not be responsible for such fees.**

Participants have found that packing everything in large Ziploc-style bags makes it easier to find socks and shirts during the expedition and also keeps clothes clean and odor-free. CHOICE suggests also bringing such a bag to store dirty clothes throughout the expedition.

*One golden piece of advice: Leave behind a clean change of clothes at the hotel or keep a clean change of clothes inside a bag during the entire expedition. Why? So that there is a fresh outfit to wear when boarding the international flight home! You'll thank us later!

NECESSARY ITEMS

- durable walking shoes (hiking boots or well-built tennis shoes)
**hiking boots/ rubber boots suggested due to frequent rain and potential mud*
- rain poncho or jacket
- sandals or flip-flops (for use in shower and inside sleeping area)
- swimsuit (for use in shower or lakes)
- multiple pairs of socks (lightweight long socks protect ankles from insect bites)
- three (3) pair of work pants or knee-length shorts (casual, quick-dry – not jeans)
- four (4) or five (5) t-shirts or work shirts (casual, quick-dry – not sleeveless)
- sweatshirt and/or light jacket
- one (1) long-sleeve shirt for the evenings
- underclothing (enough for entire trip without washing)
- pajamas appropriate for group sleeping
- hat or sun visor
- antibacterial wet wipe packets and antibacterial hand gel
- toothbrush and toothpaste
- deodorant
- pocket size packs of tissue
- water bottle (plastic or aluminum)
- inexpensive durable watch
- change of clothes that will be functional in the village (packed in carry-on luggage)
- travel pillow
- camera (plus extra battery and extra film/disk)
- extra prescription medicine (packed in carry-on luggage)
- sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
- lip balm
- minor blister/wound care (band-aids, moleskin, triple antibiotic cream etc.)
- pain reliever (ibuprofen, etc.)
- diarrhea medication (imodium, etc.)
- constipation medicine
- decongestant or allergy medication
- personal prescriptions
- mosquito repellent with at least 20% DEET
- chigger cream
- medium to warm sleeping bag (lightweight bag is easier to manage and pack)

- small inflatable mattress or foam pad (if desired)
- headlamp with new batteries
- good work gloves
- jumbo and mid-size Ziploc bags (for dirty/wet clothes, garbage, organizing and packing)
- personal hygiene items: towel, washcloth, soap, shampoo, toilet paper, etc.
- day bag (to transport water, jacket, hat, gloves, camera, snacks to worksite)
- personal journal and pen
- passport

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

- sleep aids (ear plugs, etc.)
- book about Guatemala (pocket guide)
- battery-operated pump with spare batteries (for optional air mattress)
- cultural sharing items (small musical instruments, photo albums, etc.)
- supplies and games for village activities (fingernail polish, materials for necklaces and bracelets, frisbees, soccer balls/ pumps, etc.)
- small multi-tool or pocket knife
- compact travel games or cards

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- bandana (used around head or neck)
- sunglasses
- snacks (granola bars, fruit leather, etc.), sweets, powder juices
- compact indoor games or projects