



FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT WORLD WATER CORPS TRAVEL TO GUATEMALA April 2008

GENERAL INFORMATION

This document contains comments and observations of past **World Water Corps** volunteers. The goal of providing this information to you is to make you fully aware of what to expect during your trip so that you may prepare in a way that will ensure you enjoy your participation to the fullest. Based on comments from previous volunteers, we understand that it is not the challenging and unexpected situations encountered during the trip that made some volunteers uncomfortable, but the lack of foreknowledge of the daily situations. Lack of awareness produces poor planning and poor planning leads to unpleasant results. Thus by providing this information, we hope to minimize the possibility of any unpleasant experiences during your upcoming adventure as a **World Water Corps** volunteer.

It has been our experience that as a volunteer, the level of satisfaction or frustration you gain from this trip, will be directly related to your willingness and flexibility to plan, work and coordinate with all Water For People and non-Water For People team members. Your expertise combined with the understanding of the social, cultural and economic situation of our in-country partners will result in a great team and a rewarding experience.

Finally, always remember that as a **World Water Corps** volunteer, you are Water For People's eyes in the field and your observations, comments, and recommendations are the only way this program will continue to grow and maximize our resources as we seek to obtain sustainable results throughout the less developed world.

TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

How can I get to Guatemala?

American and Continental Airlines both fly multiple times each day to Guatemala City from Miami, Houston, and Dallas/Fort Worth. There are also daily flights from each country in Central America to Guatemala City.

Is public transportation available?

In Guatemala, buses and minibuses are the main forms of transportation between cities and towns. Buses can be picked up at stations or en route. There are taxis in Guatemala City, however, visitors should be aware that there are taxi scams, in which drivers try to steal passengers' money/belongings. Within Santa Cruz del Quiché (location of the Water For People—Guatemala office), most destinations are within walking distance, however there are small, three-wheeled motorized vehicles for hire.

What is required to enter/exit the country?

A visa is not currently required (as of January 2008) to enter Guatemala. There is no entry fee but visitors must pay an exit fee of \$3.00 in either dollars or Quetzales. Currently there are no vaccination requirements. Please check the U.S. Department of State website for updated entry requirements, including fees, visas, and vaccinations.

MONEY

What is the local currency and can I use U.S. dollars?

The currency in Guatemala is the Quetzal. One U.S. dollar is equivalent to approximately 8 Quetzales (in January 2008). For most everyday purchases at stores, restaurants, and street vendors, visitors should expect to use Quetzales. Dollars are accepted at most hotels, but the rates are typically listed in Quetzales. Currency exchanges and banks can be easily found in the cities and at the airports. However, past **World Water Corps** volunteers found ATMs to be the most convenient way to obtain Quetzales. Remember to alert your bank or credit card provider that you will be traveling in Central America.

Will it be possible to use an ATM, Traveler' Checks, or credit cards in Guatemala?

ATMs are available in most large cities/towns in Guatemala and have been used by past **World Water Corps** volunteers. There is an ATM machine in Santa Cruz del Quiché, where **World Water Corps** volunteers will be staying. Credit cards are accepted at most hotels and some restaurants, but should not be relied upon. Travelers' checks are not accepted in most hotels and they were not used by past **World Water Corps** volunteers.

FOOD AND LODGING

What are typical accommodations?

Most hotels and lodges **World Water Corps** volunteers stayed in ranged from \$20 to \$70 per night, depending on the level of tourism in the area. Rooms will usually have private bathrooms and showers (including hot water). Typical rooms are equipped with pillows, bedding, TVs, towels, and toiletries. Most hotels have attached restaurants, but meals are not usually included in the hotel rates. Rates for double-occupancy are adjusted upward and the value varies depending on the hotel. Less expensive accommodations are available, but have not been used by World Water Corps volunteers in the past.

Is tap water safe to drink?

Tap water is not reliable in Guatemala. It is best not to drink tap water. Bottled water is widely available at grocery stores, gas stations, hotel dining rooms, etc.

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What types of food and drink are available in Guatemala?

Typical beverages include bottled water, soda, beer, tea, and coffee, although there is a large variety of local drinks available as well. Typical Guatemalan food consists of black beans, tortillas, rice, cheese, and meat or eggs. A larger variety of food can be found in most markets or restaurants. Fresh fruit and fruit smoothies can be purchased in most markets.

Are local utilities reliable?

The January 2008 mapping volunteers experienced no problems with utilities. Within Quiché, even the smallest, most remote communities have reliable electricity.

Is Internet service available?

Some hotels offer an internet café or even wireless service. However, many places do not. Internet cafés are plentiful in large towns and tourist cities. In Santa Cruz, there are a few internet cafés, but volunteers relied on the wireless service provided in the Water For People office.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

How do Guatemalans greet each other and visitors?

Spanish is the official language and is widely spoken in most cities and large towns. In villages however, many different Mayan languages are spoken. In the areas visited by **World Water Corps**, Kiche is the most prevalent Mayan language. It is expected that **World Water Corps** volunteers traveling to Guatemala will speak Spanish, but in the unlikely event they do not, here are some useful greetings in Spanish:: Hola (hello), ¿Como esta? (How are you?), Estoy bien (I am fine), Gracias (thank you).

How do people dress?

The Mestizo population in Guatemala dresses similarly to North Americans. However, **World Water Corps** volunteers noticed that most Guatemalans do not wear tank tops outside of Guatemala City and tourist areas. Mayan women often dress traditionally, in skirts and aprons made out of very bright woven material. This material is available for purchase in most markets.

TRIP PREPARATION AND PACKING SUGGESTIONS

What immunizations are recommended?

World Water Corps volunteers are encouraged to check with their doctors or a travel clinic before traveling to Guatemala. No immunizations are required.

How can I protect myself from malaria?

Visitors to Guatemala should consult with their doctor and use their discretion regarding malaria prophylaxis. During the mapping trip in January 2008, it was too cold for mosquitoes to be a problem, but in other parts of the country or during other times of the year, more caution may be necessary.

How should I prepare for the weather?

World Water Corps volunteers in Guatemala should be prepared for both warm and cold weather. Days can be very warm (tee-shirt, shorts) or can be quite cold (pants, sweaters, jackets, hats). Most nights were cold. Most hotels provide extra blankets and you can always ask for more. Volunteers should also bring rain jackets.

What specific supplies might be useful?

Past **World Water Corps** volunteers have found the following items useful:

- Shower shoes/flip flops
- Walking shoes with good traction
- Umbrella or raincoat for rainy periods
- Travel alarm clock or watch
- Sunscreen
- First aid kit, including Band-Aids, Imodium, Tylenol, and a thermometer
- A few easy-to-transport, high-energy snacks for long days in the field
- Detergent for washing items in bathroom sink, although laundry is sometimes available for a fee at hotels/lodges
- Backpack or bag to carry supplies (water, camera, papers, etc.) in the field
- Computer flash drives
- Anything required to survive very long layovers and flights

What supplies have past volunteers found unnecessary?

Past **World Water Corps** volunteers have found the following items to be unnecessary (although requirements may be different for different people traveling under various circumstances):

- Iodine tablets or water filters (because of the availability of bottled water)
- Excessive amount of cash (ATMs are widely available)

MAPPING AND MONITORING ASSIGNMENTS

Who will our team work with?

Mapping and monitoring volunteers will work in a team that typically includes one or two volunteers, one or two Water For People–Guatemala staff members, and one or two representatives from local partner organizations or local government.

How will we get to the projects and villages?

Private cars and drivers are provided by Water For People–Guatemala. The drivers may be Water For People in-country staff or hired drivers. Most villages are in remote rural or peri-urban areas and require a one- to two-hour drive each way.

What is a typical day like?

Each day of the assignment will include visits to multiple project sites. Depending on the site characteristics and locations, between two and eight sites are typically visited by each team on each day. Teams will conduct activities as described in the protocol. While in the field, there is usually a small town restaurant for lunch but the team should always carry snacks in case one is not available. Working in the field can be tiring and the weather may be hot, sunny, and humid. Some of the sites are two hours each way outside of Santa Cruz, so you should anticipate several long days in the field. Volunteers should be prepared to protect themselves from the sun and drink lots of water. Teams will enter data on laptop computers in the evening or on a designated “data-entry day.”

Where will I go to the bathroom?

Many of the places where we will visit do not have sanitary facilities. You may find a rudimentary toilet, but be prepared to use open fields, if necessary. Most Guatemalan toilets use water instead of toilet paper for cleansing. Past volunteers have

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recommended having your own toilet paper with you at all times and a bag to put the garbage in for later disposal. Bringing hand wipes or gel cleaner is a good idea.

Will Water For People provide supplies for the assignment?

Yes, Water For People in Guatemala will provide the necessary forms, writing implements, clipboards, digital cameras (for official pictures), laptops, and other supplies required to complete the assignment. However, volunteers may be asked if they can bring some additional digital cameras or laptops if there are not enough to equip the whole team.