

SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR EVS

Quetzaltenango, Guatemala



General Information of Guatemala



Size: 108 890 km²

Population: 14 millions inhabitants

Climate:

From May to October: rainy season
Mostly afternoon or during the night.

December to April: dry season

Sunny mostly all year, especially in the morning

World time zone:

7 or 8 hours more depending on the seasons. When it is 10am in Guatemala, it is 6pm in Europe

Culture

The culture of Guatemala reflects strong Mayan and Spanish influences and continues to be defined as a contrast between poor Mayan villagers in the rural highlands, and the urbanized and relatively wealthy mestizos population (known in Guatemala as *ladinos*) who occupy the cities and surrounding agricultural plains.

Guatemala has 22 departments, each of which has very different traditions, food, mayan languages, etc.

The main religion is Christian catholic and evangelic. There is also the Mayan believes and this is mixed with Catholicism.

More information in the web site:

<http://www.visitguatemala.com>

Money

1€=10 Quetzal

Cash is the most common way to pay.

Use of ATM: No all the ATM machine are secured. Ask the coordinator which Atm are the good ones and go with someone else. When you are walking around the city, take with you just the money you really need.

National events

30 of June: Army's day

9 of August: International day of indigenous communities

15 of September: National day

20 of October: Revolution day

1 of November: Days of the Dead

26 of November: Garifuna community's day



General Information of Quetzaltenango

Quetzaltenango is commonly called «Xela» by local people.

Location 4 hours from Guatemala city, located in the highlands, in the core of the Mayan communities.

Altitude 2300 meters OSL

Climate chill, cold during the night. Sunny during the day

Atmosphere: Xela has a very international environment and rich cultural movement. There are many local volunteers and also international students because the language courses and also there is huge community of international workers and volunteers.

Local transportation

The most common way to travel inside the city is by microbus. Guatemalan addresses consist of the street or avenue (Calle or Avenida) on which the building is found, the nearest cross street, and a building number. This system makes finding most places in Xela fairly easy once you understand the system. You can walk to most places in Zones 1 and 3 from your house in around 30 minutes or less, but local microbus are easy and helpful for going to farther away places. Minibuses cost Q1.25 or Q1.50 and go from Parque Central toward either the Minerva Terminal and Hiper Paiz or the Rotonda and back. Ask to make sure you get on the right one. Minibuses toward Minerva can be caught on 14 Av. between 4&5 Calle, and will pass through La Democracia on their way toward the Terminal Minerva. Minibuses to La Rotonda can be caught on 12a Av. at 9a Calle, across from the gas station.

To catch “chicken” buses to other parts of Guatemala, take a minibus to Terminal Minerva and walk through the market to the other side, then ask the ayudantes for the bus you want. Buses toward the western coast pass by La Rotonda after leaving the Terminal and can be caught from there as well. When traveling to and from Guatemala City, we recommend first-class buses as a safer and more comfortable travel option.

First-Class Buses: In order to be assured of getting a ticket, especially on holidays and weekends, please buy your ticket at least 1-2 days in advance.

Link www.xelawho.com



EMERGENCY NUMBER

Bonifaz's number +502 5888-1396

House's number +502 7761-7815

Police – +502 7765-4987

Firefighters (Ambulance) –
+502 7761-2002

Hospital Quetzaltenango – Calle
Rodolfo Robles 23-51, Zone 1.
Phone: +502 7761-4381.

Hospital La Democracia – 13
Avenida 6-51, Zone 3.
Phone – +502 7763-56671.

Medical Clinic – FUNDAP Salud. 17
Av. 0-41, Zone 1. Phone:
+502 7761-6585.

Dentist – Professional Dental
Clinic, 3a Calle 12-61 Zona 1
(just up the hill from Black Cat
Hostel), tel. +502 7761-4105

INGUAT (Guatemalan Tourism
Institute): tel. +502 2421-2800,
www.visitguatemala.com.

Xelawho Quetzaltenango's cultural
& night-life magazine
www.xelawho.com

Safety Concerns

Guatemala is a relatively safe country for foreigners, but it is important to keep in mind that it is a developing country. Not so many crimes like theft can be an issue; however, if you are mindful and take precautions you can highly decrease your chances of being of victim.

Xela is a relatively safe city, probably more so than many cities in the world. Foreigners generally will feel secure while walking around until 9pm or later with friends, but, as in any city, some caution is advised. Please use common sense and avoid streets which seem poorly lit or deserted. Remember at all times to look both ways before stepping into the street, even on one-way roads, as driving regulations are often ignored and pedestrians are not given the right of way. We recommend mild paranoia as a traveling companion which will keep you more aware of your surroundings than you might otherwise be. Traveling in groups at night is a good idea, especially for women and those who live farther from the city center. Remember that a taxi is a good value for the safety it gives.

Theft Though violent assaults are rare, theft is a problem in Guatemala. As in any city, please be aware of your possessions and surroundings at all times. In markets and other crowded areas, it is especially necessary to be aware of pickpockets. Keep your money and passport in a money belt or pouch underneath your clothing, and keep backpacks, fanny packs, or purses securely fastened to the front of your body. Keep purses or backpacks within your sight as well in restaurants, internet cafes, coffee, shops, and bars or clubs. The risk of robbery is higher at tourist destinations, such as Antigua and Chichicastenango, and at night, especially around Lake Atitlán. As always, travel in groups and stay aware of your surroundings.

Travel Please ask your mentor or tutor about the current security situation before traveling to new areas or on unknown bus routes. We do not want our volunteers getting into dangerous situations which could have been avoided. Try to be aware of planned demonstrations and protests, which can impede travel plans and create disturbances. We recommend that you do not travel on night buses, as the risk of attacks and armed robbery or assault is much higher.

Passports Please carry only a photocopy of your passport, not the original, when traveling inside the country. Keep your passport in a safe place at your home. If you must carry your passport, such as for cashing a Traveler's Check, or during international travel, be sure to carry it on your person and underneath clothing. If your original passport is lost or stolen, you will need to contact your national embassy.

Your Health

Guatemala is not a high risk country for infectious diseases. As we can not give you professional medical advice we recommend that you visit your local physician before you travel if you have any questions. It is always a good idea to up-to-date with all routine vaccinations.

Many volunteers experience mild diarrhea or other digestive issues during their first week or two in Guatemala. Generally, the body is just adjusting to a new environment, with different foods and fluids. In order to avoid more serious problems, we recommend that volunteers do not eat food sold in the streets or at market stalls, drink water which is not bottled or boiled, or eat any salads or uncooked fruits or vegetables unless in a host family's home or reputable restaurant. Please also be aware that Xela is at a high altitude, so you will need to drink plenty of water and use sunscreen in order to stay healthy.

Malaria You do not need Malaria pills (cloroquina) in Xela. However, you may want to use them if you plan to travel in the Petén region, the coast, or through other parts of Central America. You can buy them over the counter in any local pharmacy; the dosage is customarily 500 mg once a week, from one week before your trip until three weeks after. Also, ingesting vitamin B1 (Thiamin) and garlic starting five days before you arrive in a tropical area will discourage mosquitoes and other insects from biting.

Stomach Aliments If you have a digestive issue which persists for more than two or three days or seems especially debilitating, it could be evidence that you've picked up a bacterial infection, parasites, or amoebas. Please ask your tutor to bring you to the doctor in case you feel you need it.



Living in community, Respect the others

- Alcohol and tobacco are not permitted in your room. Drugs are prohibited during your volunteering service.

- No overnight guests are allowed. Please do not invite third parties into your room without permission.

- Always use internet cafes or your own telephone to make international calls and not your host's telephone line. Even if you have a calling card, the phone company will still charge them for the use of this service.

- Use properly all the appliances and facilities in your homestay. If you break or destroy any thing there, you will have to replace, fix it or pay for it.

- Be careful with the key. If you break it or loose it, you will have to replace it. Volunteers must promptly reimburse their homestay if they cause any damage in the home.

- Follow to normal rule of community life and to contribute to routine operation of the household.

RULES IN THE HOUSE

- Make an effort to participate in community activities: cooking, cleaning, planning activities, etc following the established planning.

- Show consideration and tolerance to other members.

- Notify to your coordinator when you are going out during the night and tell what time you are coming back.

- Be considerate using water and electricity. If you are not in your room, turn off the light and any other electronic devices.

- Use properly the recycle boxes.

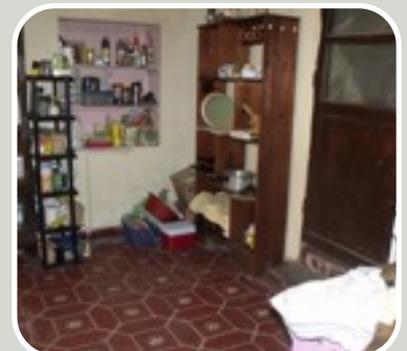
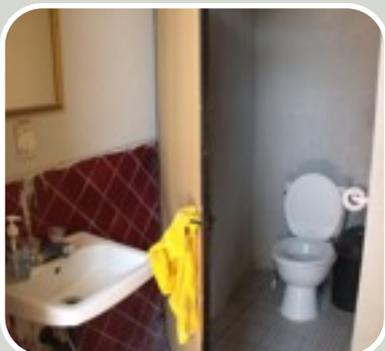
- Clean up your own room and the common place during and before you leave the project.

- Exercise consideration and good judgment. Avoid abusive, aggressive or inappropriate behaviour

Other important details

Don't throw toilet paper into toilet. That is why there is always bin in the toilet to throw it.

You will need a plug adapter to connect your laptop or any other electronic devices. You can bring it or buy here that is cheaper.





What to bring?

- Typical food and drinks from your country (candies, tea, biscuits, etc)
- Warm and waterproof clothes and umbrella (Xela is in the mountains and it can get very cold at night)
- Hiking and comfortable shoes (high heels not recommended)
- Mini skirts are not recommended because of the cultural differences
- Swimming suit (beaches are 2h from Xela)
- Bring only the necessary electronics items (camera, telephone, laptop - there is free wifi available, etc). Avoid to bring luxury and expensive devices
- Special medical treatments if you have it and a first aid kit.
- Plug adaptor or you can buy here, which will be cheaper
- you may bring some euros or you can use your visa card
- Consider of your long travel, your checking luggage may be delayed. take in your carriage luggage extra clothes.
- your favourite toys, books, sleepers, cd, coffee, guitar - whatever you will be sure you will miss it.
- the room in Xela will be your «home» for 2 months so think of the details that you will help you to feel at home.
- Good mood and volunteer spirit

Basic Spanish

- Hola - Hello
- Adiós - Goodbye
- Sí - Yes
- No - No
- Buenos días - Good morning
- Buenas tardes - Good afternoon
- Buenas noches - Good Evening
- Bienvenido - Welcome
- Por favor - Please
- Gracias - Thank you
- Lo siento - I am sorry
- Perdóneme - Excuse me
- Hasta luego - see you soon
- ¿Cómo estás?/¿Que tal? - How are you?

Para presentarse - to present yourself

- Me llamo ... - My name is
- Mucho gusto - Nice to meet you
- ¿De donde eres? - Where are you from?
- Soy voluntario - I am volunteer

Numeros - Numbers

- 1 - un
- 2 - dos
- 3 - tres
- 4 - cuatro
- 5 - cinco
- 6 - seis
- 7 - siete
- 8 - ocho
- 9 - nueve
- 10 - diez

