

Guatemala Resource Guide

General information for short-term teams serving in the Antigua and Escuintla regions. Your team leader will send details specific to your trip.

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish. Kaqchikel (a Maya language) is also spoken in villages around Antigua.
Currency	Quetzal (Q). About Q7.6 to US\$1 in October 2026.
Time zone	Central Standard Time all year, with no daylight saving. Same as US Central in winter, one hour behind it in summer.
Electricity	120 volts with US-style plugs. No adapter needed.
Phone	Country code +502. Local numbers have eight digits.
Airport	La Aurora International (GUA), Guatemala City.
Seasons	Dry season November to April. Rainy season May to October, with heavy afternoon downpours.

THE TWO REGIONS

	Antigua	Escuintla
Department	Sacatepéquez	Escuintla
Setting	Colonial city and UNESCO World Heritage Site in the central highlands, ringed by volcanoes. A tourist hub with cobblestone streets.	Working city and farming region on the Pacific slope, known for sugar cane. Few tourists.
Elevation	About 5,000 ft	About 1,100 ft in the city, dropping to sea level toward the coast
Weather	Mild days in the 70s °F, cool nights in the 50s. Bring a jacket.	Hot and humid, often 85 to 95 °F. Plan for heat.
Drive from airport	About 1 to 1.5 hours	About 1.5 hours
Malaria (CDC)	No risk	Risk area. See Health.

Antigua and Escuintla are roughly an hour apart by road. Drive times vary widely with traffic.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- **Passport.** It must be valid when you enter. We recommend at least six months of validity past your return date, since airlines can be stricter.
- **Visa.** US citizens do not need one for stays up to 90 days.
- **Traveler declaration.** Everyone must file Guatemala's free electronic declaration within three days before the flight in, and again before the flight home. File it on the tax agency's site, portal.sat.gob.gt, or its app, and keep the QR code to show at the airport.
- **Look-alike sites.** The official form is free. Do not pay a third-party site to file it.
- **STEP.** Enroll your trip at step.state.gov so the US Embassy can reach you in an emergency.

HEALTH

- **See a clinician four to six weeks ahead.** The CDC recommends hepatitis A and typhoid vaccines for Guatemala, along with being current on routine vaccines.
- **Malaria.** The CDC lists Escuintla department as a malaria risk area and recommends preventive medication for travelers there. Antigua and Guatemala City are not risk areas. Ask your clinician which medication suits you.
- **Dengue.** It is present year-round, spread by mosquitoes that bite during the day. Use repellent with DEET or picaridin and wear long sleeves when you can.
- **Water and food.** Tap water is not safe to drink anywhere in the country. Drink bottled or purified water, use it to brush your teeth, and skip ice and raw produce unless your hosts prepared it.
- **Heat.** In Escuintla, drink water steadily, add electrolytes, and take shade breaks. Tell your team leader early if you feel dizzy or sick.
- **Animals.** Rabies is still found in dogs in Guatemala. Do not pet street dogs, and report any bite or scratch right away.
- **Medical care.** Good private hospitals are in Guatemala City. Care in rural areas is limited, so carry travel medical insurance that covers evacuation.

SAFETY

- **US travel advisory.** Guatemala is at Level 3, Reconsider Travel, because of crime (issued March 12, 2026). The Level 4 areas are San Marcos and Huehuetenango departments, Zone 18 of Guatemala City, and Villa Nueva. Our work is not in those areas.
- **Stay with the team.** Do not go out alone, and tell your leader where you are going.
- **Transport.** Ride only in team-arranged vehicles. Do not use public “chicken buses.” We do not travel between towns after dark.
- **Valuables.** Leave jewelry at home, keep your phone out of sight on the street, and carry a copy of your passport instead of the original.
- **Cash machines.** Avoid ATMs on the street. Use one inside a bank or hotel, in daylight, with a teammate.
- **If you are robbed,** hand over what is asked for and do not resist.
- **Volcanoes and earthquakes.** Volcán de Fuego, between the two regions, is active and erupts often. Small earthquakes are common. Follow your team leader and local authorities if an alert is issued.
- **Footing.** Antigua's cobblestones and high curbs cause more injuries than anything else. Wear sturdy shoes.

MONEY

- Bring US bills that are clean and untornd. Worn or marked bills are often refused.
- Carry small quetzal notes for markets and small shops. Cards work in many Antigua restaurants and hotels, but rarely in Escuintla's villages.
- A 10 percent tip (*propina*) is customary in restaurants and is often already on the bill.
- Bargaining in craft markets is normal. Keep it friendly and pay a fair price.

CULTURE AND CONDUCT

- Greet people before anything else. A simple “Buenos días” to everyone in the room goes a long way.
- Ask before taking photos, especially of children, patients, and women in traditional Maya dress. Never photograph inside a clinic without permission.
- Dress modestly, with shoulders covered and nothing tight or low-cut.
- Schedules run looser than at home. Be patient and flexible.
- Do not promise things you cannot deliver, and do not hand out money, candy, or gifts on your own. Give through your team leader so help reaches the community fairly.
- We are guests. Our local partners lead, and we follow their direction.

USEFUL SPANISH

English	Spanish	English	Spanish
Good morning	Buenos días	Where does it hurt?	¿Dónde le duele?
Good afternoon	Buenas tardes	How are you feeling?	¿Cómo se siente?
Please / Thank you	Por favor / Gracias	I need help	Necesito ayuda
Nice to meet you	Mucho gusto	Where is the bathroom?	¿Dónde está el baño?
What is your name?	¿Cómo se llama?	How much is it?	¿Cuánto cuesta?
I don't understand	No entiendo	God bless you	Dios le bendiga
More slowly, please	Más despacio, por favor	Excuse me	Con permiso

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Service	Number
Police (PNC)	110
Fire and ambulance (Bomberos Voluntarios)	122
Fire and ambulance (Bomberos Municipales)	123
Red Cross	125
Disaster agency (CONRED)	119
Tourist assistance (ASISTUR), 24 hours, English spoken	1500 or +502 2290-2810 WhatsApp +502 5188-1819
US Embassy, Boulevard Austriaco 11-51, Zona 16, Guatemala City	+502 2326-4000

Short numbers work from a Guatemalan phone line. From a US phone, call your team leader first.

YOUR TRIP CONTACTS

Team leader and phone	_____
Host partner contact	_____
Lodging name and address	_____
Nearest clinic or hospital	_____
Insurance company and policy	_____

Information checked October 2026 against the US State Department travel advisory, the CDC Yellow Book (2026 edition), and the US Embassy in Guatemala. Advisories and health guidance change, so confirm at travel.state.gov and cdc.gov/travel before you leave. This guide is general information and does not replace advice from your own doctor.