

Oneness through Service - Guatemala
“Teams of Service” Information Package
Including Risk Assessment

This chart contains a wealth of information collected over 6 years of Service Team experience. Please keep it in an available place before and during your trip. It might be helpful to bring this document with you to review in flight. Any questions, concerns, additions etc. can be addressed to: John Weir (jhnwr99@yahoo.ca) and/or Erik Marks (bigpine@nexicom.net) The last two pages are to be signed, completed and submitted before the trip.

TO MINIMIZE RISK

BEFORE YOUR TRIP

1. Inform yourself:

- a) The Canadian government has a web-site giving Canadians up to date information on all the countries of the world www.voyage.gc.ca and follow the links to Guatemala.
- b) It might also be valuable to read some books on the history of Guatemala, especially on the recent 36 year conflict for land:
 - Rigoberta Menchu (Nobel Peace Prize winner) for her book “An Indian Woman in Guatemala”.
 - search through google or Amazon.com or your local library

BEFORE YOUR TRIP

2. Passports

Anyone entering the United States of America on route to an international destination and entering Guatemala will require a current passport, generally with at least six months remaining before the passport expires.

Information is available at Passport Canada <http://www.ppt.gc.ca/index.aspx>

Passport applications can be obtained at most post offices and/or at the office of your local MP.

The office of your local MP will also send your application through their courier, and receive the passports upon completion. Or you can forward your application to the address listed in the application.

3. Health, Hygiene, Comfort & Safety

BEFORE YOUR TRIP

1. Vaccinations

Contact your local public health office and follow the advice given by them for your visit to Guatemala. Since you will be mainly in the highlands of Guatemala anti-malaria medication generally is not recommended.

Medical Travel Clinics can also be located through your local yellow pages under Clinics

2. Medical insurance

a. Oneness Through Service – Guatemala has no insurance and assumes no responsibility. Supplemental medical and travel insurance is compulsory. Check with your travel agent and insurance provider.

b. Bring a credit card.. Should you need medical treatment during your trip a credit card # is usually asked for during the admission process. Should you be injured and require immediate travel home for treatment ensure this possibility is included in your insurance.

3. Construction Safety Preparation

a. If you have limited experience with tools and their safe use the following Shop Manual will prove helpful information. Copies will also be available on site. (If you are experienced, you may be called on to explain procedures and be a mentor. There are some very clear and detailed explanations included in this Shop Manual.)

[//www.coa.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/ShopManual3.pdf](http://www.coa.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/ShopManual3.pdf)

b. View the following brief Habitat for Humanity video. Although it relates to house sites, it explains good basic safety procedures that apply to any building site. Excellent suggestions are given related to clothing, safety equipment, tools, maintaining safe work sites, heat exhaustion, etc.

<http://habitatgnh.org/volunteer-safety-video-low-bandwidth/>

4. Items to consider bringing

Construction Safety:

1. Although safety glasses, masks and ear plugs are available on site you may consider bringing your own. Steel toed boots are not provided. However their use is recommended. Perhaps a pair can be borrowed or bought new or second-hand. Some have done this in the past and left work boots to be given to Guatemalan workers.

Medical

- If you are currently taking medication, bring sufficient amount to last for you stay
- Bring, the Latin or alternate name of your prescription, in the event you lose your medication, a prescription is not necessary in Guatemala
- Some visitors bring a traveler's prescription of "Cipro"(antibiotics)
- Anti diarrhea medication
- Pepto bismol, Gravol, yogurt pills
- Small amounts, of a variety of across the counter medication that you might normally use
- A second pair of prescription glasses (old pair)
- Anti-bacterial lotion/zinc oxide/etc to deal with small cuts
- Band aids
- Sun tan lotion/sun block/sun glasses

Hygiene

- Anti-bacterial wash or wipes
- Small package of tissue
- Small roll of toilet paper
- ~~Toilet seat covers~~
- Personal items, such as soap, shampoo, towel, etc.

Clothing

- Summer shirts and pants
- A sweater or a jacket for the evenings because of the elevation
- Fall type sleep ware, as mentioned, evenings can be cool
- While building, closed toed footwear with rubber soles or steel toed boots

- Sun hat or cap

Odds and Ends

- Travel alarm clock
- Small flash light
- School type back-pack for daily purposes
- Picture taking equipment, extra batteries, charger
- Razor, blow drier, etc Guatemala has the same 120v as Canada
- Security pouch or money belt
- Family picture, small local souvenirs, journal, pens, etc
- Spanish/English dictionary and phrase book
- money belt
- refillable water bottle

IN GUATEMALA

1. *Never, never walk alone at night.* A taxi is approximately 30Q and a Tuk-tuk 20Q. Negotiate the price before entering the vehicle.
2. If the situation doesn't feel right, follow your instincts and leave the area.
2011 is an election year in Guatemala. This can be an "unsettled" time.
Avoid political rallies. As stated, if it does not feel right, leave the area.
3. Do not show large amounts of money.
4. Keep your camera, camcorder, digital devices etc discreetly out of sight when not in use.....in your backpack.
5. Dress, not to be noticed
6. Do not carry your passport with you unless necessary, however, carry a *photocopy of your passport at all times.*
7. Heat exhaustion and dehydration is a concern throughout your trip and specifically on the worksite particularly if you are working on the roof in direct sunlight. . Filtered water is available. Bring your own refillable water bottle. This can also be used for drinking and brushing teeth water in your room.
8. Public washrooms cost money, and are not up to the standards to which we are accustomed, frequently the bowls do not have a seats, and often there is no toilet paper. So bring your own toilet paper and wet wipes. However in areas frequented by tourists conditions have improved significantly.
9. Even the washrooms in restaurants can sometimes leave a lot to be desired.
10. DO NOT flush toilet paper down the toilet - you are expected to deposit the used tissue in a container beside the toilet

SHOWERS IN THE COMMUNITY HOUSE

1. A safety issue, "DO NOT TOUCH THE SHOWER HEADS" that have wires running to them, as the showerhead is direct-wired and not always well grounded.
2. When taking a shower, try to run the water strongly enough to activate the heating element, but not too strong, or the element will not have sufficient time to heat the water.

4. Food

IN GUATEMALA

1. Resist purchasing food from street vendors, regardless of how great it smells or looks

2. Wash your hands before eating anything.
3. A general rule when considering whether or not to eat food outside a restaurant, if you can't cook it, or peel it, don't eat it.
4. Inspect all beverages that have been purchased on the street to insure that the seal has not been broken.
5. Some people abstain from eating green salads while in Guatemala, however restaurants serving tourists triple wash their lettuce.
6. The good news is that the food in restaurants and guest homes is safe to eat. Some people choose to chew a pepto bismal tablet before eating.
7. Drink lots of water however **do not drink any water that is not bottled or boiled.**
8. When brushing your teeth use bottled or filtered water.
9. Ice cubes in restaurants that serve tourists are generally safe
10. 10% tip for food service in restaurants is the norm. Check your bill as some of the restaurants automatically add in the "propina"(tip).

5. Luggage

BEFORE YOUR TRIP

1. Extra Suitcase

You may be asked to bring down a suitcase of school supplies. In preparation for that request, please attempt to borrow or have donated an old large suitcase that is capable of holding 50 lbs of donations. At the airport, should this suitcase require payment asextra luggage, keep the receipt if you require reimbursement.

2. Gifts

If you are bringing items for the children, consider school supplies, balloons, bubbles, candy. Avoid bringing expensive gifts, war related toys, battery powered toys and toys that promote sexism and western culture.

3. What not to bring

- Expensive jewelry or expensive looking jewelry/watches
- Unnecessary credit cards, drivers license, etc
- Anything that you do not want to lose

6. Air travel

BEFORE YOUR TRIP

1. If you don't have a travel agent you might consider calling Rick or Lisa at RR travel 613-735-3777 or 888-288-0810. They have been very successful at getting a good price to Guatemala. Some have also booked flight through the web. (Hotwire, Expedia, etc.)
2. When comparative shopping make sure that all airport and departure taxes are included in the price.
3. Depending on your family situation and health consider cancellation insurance

DEPARTURE TO AND TOUCHDOWN IN GUATEMALA

1. Before touchdown in Guatemala you will be asked to fill out two forms, one for immigration and the other for customs. The immigration form will be dealt with when your passport is stamped and the customs form after you collect your luggage and proceed to the exit.
2. On the immigration form indicate that your purpose for visiting is as a tourist, or other and write in volunteer.
3. For the custom form, indicate that you have nothing to declare, unless you are exceeding the allowed items and amounts indicated on the form. If you are bringing down bags for the school, again indicate that you have nothing to declare as they are donations

and are not intended for re-sale.

4. If this is the first time you have traveled internationally, simply follow the crowd, don't worry about getting through immigration quickly, as you will simply have to spend more time waiting for your luggage.

5. After passing through immigration, take advantage of the luggage carts that are available.

6. Once your luggage has been collected proceed to the open area, do not go to the far right where the customs officers are waiting, as they will assume you have been directed to them and will go through your luggage.

7. Proceed towards the exit (large glass doors), but do not leave the enclosed area until the entire team has assembled in the foyer near the Guatemala tourist information desk. Then look for the welcoming team through the final glass doors.

8. Never let your bags out of your sight.

9. Depending on the amount of luggage you are bringing we may need the assistance of a porter. We will help to control the situation and the number of porters as they can be very assertive. Please have a few dollars available.

10. We will load you on to a waiting shuttle and proceed to Antigua

11. Should you be receiving re-imburement for your ticket, keep all boarding passes and receipts as proof of travel.

7. Connecting with home

BEFORE YOUR TRIP

1. If your family and friends have access to e-mail, you would do well to set up an email account with either yahoo, hotmail or gmail. These email providers are free

2. Leave Passport #, travel itinerary. Contact information with someone at home in case of emergency.

3. Community House address and contact #'s are:

13 Caille Real

Santa Inez

(502)-78-82-47-78

Susan cell (502) 52-55-89-32

Richard cell (502) 43-66-57-97

3. To be prepared in the event of death and a body has to be transported back to Canada check with the Canadian embassy in Guatemala for the procedures your family should be aware of before the trip.

8. Money

BEFORE YOUR TRIP

- ATM cards are more reliable in Guatemala. If possible use a card with a low balance and/or overdraft to minimize the risk. Check with your bank, but generally, all cards bearing the PLUS symbol work in the cities.

- Phone your credit card company to make them aware that you may be using the card out of country to ensure continual use.

- Travelers cheques and cash are best to be in US dollars

- Do not ex-change your US dollars for Quetzales until you get to Guatemala

- Have one dollar US bills to deal with tips etc.

- Major credit cards are accepted in restaurants and higher end stores in Antigua.

IN GUATEMALA

As mentioned, wait to exchange your money in Guatemala. You will be able to change USA dollars at the bank with a photocopy of your passport, but your passport will be required to cash travelers cheques.

You may also wish to exchange some money for quetzals at the airport on your arrival. You will be charged a higher rate for this convenience.

Consider using a money belt. It's not of much use in a robbery but it does foil the pickpockets. Always carry a small amount of cash with you (100Q). Robbers may not believe you if you say you don't have any money and become more aggressive. If involved in a robbery DO NOT RESIST.

9. Last minute reminders**BEFORE YOUR TRIP**

1. Remember your passport and one other photo I.D. and a photocopy of your passport
2. Air travel itinerary
3. Check to make sure you have your money/ATM card (PLUS) /credit card
4. Review the "Items to consider bringing" section and your own personal list
5. Make sure that things such as tweezers, nail clippers, pocket knives, etc are not packed in your carry-on luggage.
6. Make sure any liquids, aerosols or gels you are carrying with you are in small enough containers to meet airline security requirements.
6. Pack some dry snacks, as in some cases there are no in-flight meals and it may not be possible to purchase food upon your arrival in Guatemala. However you will have the opportunity to eat during your stop over in the USA

10. Social matters**IN GUATEMALA**

1. Generally speaking, Guatemalan behaviour is conservative in speech, social pleasantries and dress. Although that is changing in the urban centers, manners and behaviours that your grandparents may have encouraged, go a long way in Guatemala.
2. Picture taking can be tricky. When photographing an individual it is always best to ask permission, especially when it comes to photographing children. The issues can be both religious and fear based. Also, if you feel awkward about taking a picture, it's probably best not to.
3. Street beggars, present both an awkward and moral dilemma. There are no social nets for the poor. Thus some people choose begging as a means to support their family and themselves and in some cases, their habit. Many are physically and/or mentally challenged. You may choose to carry a supply of granola bars and juice boxes to distribute.

11. Working at the Community House**IN GUATEMALA**1. Considering Food

The fare at the Community House will be simple and nutritious, and meals will be scheduled. Team members may be expected to share in some preparation as well as clean-up after meals. (tasks are posted on the fridge)

Liberal use of hand washing is expected, as well as hand sanitizer during food preparation.

It is very important to wash and dry (to avoid mould) the dishes thoroughly, and to rinse them in a hypochlorite solution (1/4cup of bleach in the rinse-water).

12. Getting the most out of your visit to Guatemala

1. Consider keeping a journal, to record your daily thoughts, feelings and reflections.
2. Try to pay attention to detail, especially if you happen to visit a home of a poor family or participate in feeding the homeless
3. Besides it being a cultural experience, attempt to also make it a spiritual experience.
4. Be aware of the massive unemployment as well as the under employment of men, women and children forcing them to sell in the street.
5. Pay attention to the environment all Guatemalans have to live in, air quality, garbage management, etc.
6. Try to be present to the people you have come to visit and serve, try to avoid being a tourist
7. Some of what you see/experience in Guatemala may be disturbing. Take advantage of the Spiritual and Communal dimension of the House of Service to support each other.

13. Construction Safety

In the six years that Oneness has been organizing work teams there have been no accidents on the work sites. The following is an attempt to formalize and explain the practices that have been in place and add a few new ones in order to maintain an accident free work site for future work teams.

Oneness Through Service – Guatemala has no insurance and although we try our best to inform about safety issues, it is the responsibility of each individual to take responsibility for his/her own safety. Oneness Through Service – Guatemala cannot assume responsibility.

On the first day of work an orientation session will be held to review safety issues & procedures, to identify specific tasks, and to locate tools, materials, first aid kit, etc. Each morning before work, time will continue to be set aside to review safety practices, work progress, plans for the day and issues that may have arisen from the previous day.

Below are guidelines, to be aware of before your arrival on the work site in order to maintain a safe work site for all:

1. Individuals are expected to continue to contribute to a safe environment, follow safe procedures and use tools safely. Safety has been everybody's concern. Since work teams normally have some inexperienced people, everyone must pay particular attention to safety. Individuals are encouraged to pair up - more experienced with less experienced (a list will be posted). Being conscious of the safety of others as well as yourself has been important. Observers can often see danger better than the worker involved in the project. Let your fellow worker know of your concerns. Be cautious at all times and ask questions. Do not go ahead with a task if you are uncertain how it is done, or if you are unable to do it.

Safety has been based on knowledge, skill and an attitude of care and concern:

1. Most tools used in the construction and finishing of the furniture are simple: battery powered drills, jig saws, sandpaper and paint. We also use a table saw and skill saw to which only experienced workers will be assigned.

2. Use only the tools you are comfortable with. Leave the table saw, skill saw and router to experienced team members. There is also “on the job” training. Dust will be a major factor on ground level where wood is being cut, use a dust mask if you are working in this area.
3. Furniture construction and traffic in the house will create dust throughout, since the house is open to outside air. Please do your part to keep the house clean: sweep-up during the day as necessary to keep an uncluttered work site and at the end of each workday.
4. Basic knowledge of how and when to use tools will be available in the Georgia Tech Shop Manual available on site and through excerpts posted on site. Suggested safety equipment to use with each tool is highlighted in red on these excerpts and italicized beside the tool name in the manual. (Although some tools, procedures and information in this manual do not apply, it gives an excellent overview of considerations necessary in maintaining the safe operation of both power and hand tools.) Not all procedures can be covered in a manual, and asking for help from others on the team is always recommended and encouraged.

Virtually all power tool accidents have been preventable.

To avoid accidents by both novices and experienced operators alike it has helped to be aware of the following causes:

- *Inattention through repetition* - This can occur when the user becomes hurried, or complacent during repetitive actions. Slow down and think. If making repetitive cuts, pause and refocus frequently.
- *Unexpected events* - Tools are powerful, and can quickly overcome the user. The most common occurrence is kickback on the Table Saw. Continue to be aware of the hazards. This accident group also includes falls, clothing being pulled in, and other general safety precautions.
- *Inexperience or Overconfidence* – Users should continue to respect the tool, but never fear them. Inexperience leads to fear and not reacting to dangerous situations. If using a tool for the first time take lots of time to become familiar with it with the help of an experienced colleague on scrap material. Overconfidence can lead to thinking that “nothing will happen to me”. Continue to be aware of this and taking a break can minimize this attitude.
(adapted from the Georgia Tech Shop Manual & Habitat for Humanity Construction Safety Policy)

Guidelines for a safe attitude

1. THINK before you do your work or task.
2. If you are uncertain about how to do a task or how to operate a power tool—ASK.
3. Concentrate on your task and eliminate distractions.
4. Know where the first-aid kit is located and how to get emergency help.
5. Inspect all power tools, hand tools, ladders and scaffolding on a daily basis.
6. Advise the building co-ordinator IMMEDIATELY of any unsafe or hazardous tool or condition.

Clean work site

A clean work place, neat and in good order, is a safe work place. Continue to maintain good housekeeping which contributes to the efficiency of the worker and is important in preventing accidents.

Continue to position building materials and supplies in carefully laid out piles to allow

adequate aisles and walkways. Clean up all rubbish and scrap materials on a daily basis. Do not permit blocks of wood, nails, bolts, empty cans, pipe, wire or other materials to accumulate on the work site. They interfere with work and can constitute a hazard. Keep tools and equipment that are not being used in chests, panels or tool boxes. This protects the tools and the workers.

Continue to never leave a work site unguarded unless all tools and materials have been properly secured.

Emergency medical care

If someone is injured on the job, contact the furniture builder co-ordinator immediately and summon any needed medical help. (A list of numbers and names will be posted and a copy will be in the first aid kit) You also should use the supplies located in the first-aid kit to stabilize the injury as much as possible until medical help arrives. Volunteers who are comfortable with first aid and/or have first-aid experience will be identified and will help any injured worker.

This risk assessment was compiled using material from

1. the Oneness through Service "Teams of Service" Information Package prepared by Richard & Susan Schmaltz.
2. <http://www.habitat.ca/>
3. <http://www.coa.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/ShopManual3.pdf>
4. <http://habitatgnh.org/volunteer-safety-video-low-bandwidth/>
5. <http://www.helpforhumanity.org/finalsafetyplan.pdf>
6. <http://www.sja.ca/>

Lists that will be posted in prominent places known to everyone:

1. Emergence phone numbers
2. Safety reminder posters
3. The Georgia State Design Shop Manual
4. Experienced and Inexperienced Partner list
5. Furniture Co-ordinator and alternate including identified users of the skill saws, router and table saw.
6. A binder with all the "Teams of Service" Information Package forms provided by work team members will be kept available to the furniture co-ordinator and alternate for access during an emergency.

Oneness through Service - Guatemala
“Teams of Service” Information Package
Including Risk Assessment

General information (please print)

Name: (last, middle, first) _____

Address: _____
(apt/house number/street/city/postal code)

Mailing address: _____
(if different from above)

Telephone: _____
(home) (work) (cell)

Emergency contacts:

i. _____
ii. _____
iii. _____
(name) (relationship) (telephone day/night)

Passport number: _____ **Country:** _____
Country of birth: _____ **Country of residence:** _____

Medical Information

Family doctor: _____
(name) (telephone day/night)

Medical Insurance Information:

Insurance Company: _____

Website address: _____

Identification numbers (plan, ID, etc.) _____

Canadian phone number & Toll free International Number: _____

Credit Card provider & # (on arrival at hospital this is required information) _____

Allergies: _____

Medical alerts: _____

Current medications: _____

Any other information that might be important in an emergency:

Oneness Through Service – Guatemala

Team of Service Waiver

I, the undersigned, having read the risk assessment (pages 1-10) in the Teams of Service information Package, understand that Oneness Through Service – Guatemala has no insurance. I take on the responsibility to get the insurance coverage I need.

I agree that:

I will hold Oneness Through Service, and Horizons of Friendship blameless in all matters concerning my period of service time in Guatemala.

In undertaking this period of service, I assume all risks associated with this journey.

Name: _____ Date: _____
(please print)

Signature: _____