



GUATEMALA STOVE PROJECT

VOLUNTEER TRIP HANDBOOK

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Mission Statement

The objectives of the Guatemala Stove Project (the GSP) are to assist in the relief of poverty and to improve the health and well being of the indigenous and other disadvantaged peoples of Guatemala by:

- Building and providing cook stoves
- Providing other necessary supplies and supports to the above peoples, and to health, education and social agencies providing assistance to the above peoples;
- Raising funds and recruiting volunteers in Canada to support the above objectives;
- Educating people about the conditions and needs of the above peoples to foster international understanding and cooperation

Guidelines for Volunteer Applicants to the GSP Annual Stove Building trip to Guatemala.

The Guatemala Stove Project's primary focus is as a fundraising organization that finances the building of masonry cook stoves for the indigenous Maya families of the western highlands of Guatemala.

The main purpose of our annual trip is to provide our volunteers with an awareness of the living conditions of the families that we support through our stove-building program.

We do not charge an organizational fee for participating in this trip. The trip is organized and guided by unpaid volunteers who generously donate their time and efforts to arrange accommodations, transportation, stove building activities, and provide some travel advice.

Working with others is a fundamental aspect of the GSP Exposure Trip. GSP volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds to work together for a short period of time in the stove building trip. They will be living and working with others in a variety of groupings – groups form to build stoves, prepare lunches, eat meals, share experiences from each day, plan excursions etc. The entire group travels together each day to the village work sites. For cohesion and smooth functioning, it is important for all volunteers to put aside specific individual needs and wants and focus on promoting GSP values and goals. As well, all individuals will be treated with respect, a positive attitude and understanding.

Prospective travelers will apply to be part of the exposure trip and be successfully interviewed by Board of Directors members before being confirmed as a participant.

We are one of the few organizations that do not add an additional charge for participating in an international volunteer experience. However, each participant pays their own way, so there are some shared costs for the trip (transportation, tools)

The stove building/ exposure trip lasts 8 days (usually Saturday to Sunday, plus the following Monday). Because of the cost and time of traveling all the way to Guatemala, many volunteers choose to stay and travel there for the remainder of the second week in a self guided fashion - this has been recommended by virtually all previous travelers. Often the Stove building volunteers travel together to take advantage of group transportation and lodging discounts and for camaraderie. We can help connect volunteers with similar travel plans, provide some excellent ideas for places to visit (San Pedro and Lake Atitlan/ Antigua), and provide some suggestions for transportation and lodging options.

Since the annual volunteer trip is to promote awareness among our volunteers, **our expectation is that you make a commitment to support the fundraising efforts of the GSP** before you participate in the annual February trip to Guatemala, and on a continuing basis. This can be done in several ways. It currently costs \$300.00 CAD to fund the building of an improved cooking stove. **We ask for a commitment from each volunteer to raise funds equivalent to a minimum of 2 stoves (approximately \$600.00 CAD) in the year preceding and/or following your participation in the volunteer trip.**

We also ask that you contribute some volunteer hours helping out at promotional events or fundraisers in the year before or immediately following participation in the annual trip.

GSP VOLUNTEER TRIP ESSENTIALS

BEFORE LEAVING HOME

Health

There will be times of strenuous activity during the Exposure trip. We work at high altitude (8000 ft.) where many roadways and paths are very steep. If you have a pre-existing health condition (heart/ respiratory/ blood pressure/ smoker), consult your physician for advice about travel to Guatemala and participation in this trip.

The Guatemala Stove Project will accept no responsibility for injury or illness; we all travel voluntarily at our own risk. All trip participants must provide proof of personal health coverage for their time in Guatemala.

Vaccinations: Make sure your vaccinations for tetanus and typhoid are up to date. Obtain vaccinations for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B if possible.

Other: Pack extra eyeglasses/ contact lenses on your trip if you can. You should also bring your prescription for eyeglasses and contacts in case you should lose them.

You may be exposed to TB, head lice and various parasites.

Out of country emergency medical insurance, including evacuation insurance, is strongly recommended.

*Please provide the travel coordinator with this information prior to the trip.

Banking, Credit and Debit cards:

Traveling with a debit card and using an ATM is the quickest and most convenient method of obtaining cash. It is safe because it eliminates the need to carry large amounts of cash. The local currency is the Quetzal (Q).

Notify your bank and credit card company that you will be withdrawing funds during your travel dates. Try to withdraw the daily maximum of 2000Q about \$350 CAD (to avoid bank fees) in Antigua. In Xela, there are many ATMs where you can withdraw local currency. There is an 'English' button on ATMs for your convenience. Withdraw the daily limit to decrease bank fees. We discourage volunteers from using traveler's cheques, converting cash, or getting VISA advances at Guatemalan banks; it takes at least a half-day of waiting in bank line-ups.

We recommend bringing about \$100 US cash (in small bills) to use at the beginning and end of the trip.

Communication:

Internet – set up an accessible email account and “Whats app” account before leaving Canada. The hotels will have wifi. You will use “Whats app” for communicating with the group in Guatemala and it can be used to communicate with family and friends home as well.

Phone use – for calling from Canada to Guatemala we recommend purchasing a long distance calling card (CiCi has the best rates for calling to Guatemala). First dial 011 502 and then the phone number. For emergencies, Tom will have a Guatemala cell phone number after mid-January. The number will be sent out to all volunteers by the end of January. If you want to have a phone while in Guatemala, you can purchase a SIM card when you enter the country.

Stomach Concerns:

It is very common for foreigners to experience stomach problems in Guatemala. The most common problem is traveler's diarrhea, but you can also easily pick up other parasites, amoebas, or bacteria. Here are some tips to help you minimize the risk of stomach ailments.

Before you travel you may:

- To help your stomach adjust, begin eating more beans, especially black beans, before you leave home.
- Take acidophilus capsules or powder (look for them at a health food store) or eat lots of yogurt. This helps to establish good bacteria in the digestive tract to help fight off the new bacteria you will encounter.
- Ask your family doctor about CIPRO for travelers' diarrhea and bring Imodium or something similar.

Expenses above the costs of flights, lodging and food

A **\$300.00 CDN transportation + tool fee** will be collected in January at the Stove Building Workshop. This will pay for most of your group travel within Guatemala.

Tools: Tom will purchase tools for the teams for stove building using money from your tool deposit - (\$25.00) (a trowel, tape measure, brick hammers and level). **You are responsible for providing your own safety glasses, dust mask and work gloves.**

ENTERING GUATEMALA

If your luggage is missing when you arrive, don't leave the airport until you have filled in a form to reclaim your baggage with the airline. Usually they are titled, "Informe del Servicio de equipajes" or similar. You will also need to give the address for Posada La Merced (7a Ave Norte #43A Antigua) to the customer service representative. You should be prepared for it to take up to a week to arrive. You may want to have at least one set of clothes in your carry-on bag, just in case!

When filling out the Guatemala Customs form, enter the following: destination: Xela; purpose of visit: tourist

You will receive a tourist card which, along with an exit tax, must be submitted on leaving Guatemala. The exit tax may be included in your plane ticket.

WHAT TO PACK

In Xela (Quetzaltenango) in February the mornings and evenings are cold and the days are warm (bring layers of clothing to wear). As we head back towards Antigua, the days are warmer and more like our summer.

Work clothes: T-shirts, long pants, sweatshirt or work shirt, bandana or sun hat, heavy sweater or fleece, sturdy shoes or boots, enough underwear and socks for about 5 days, raincoat/windbreaker, and warm hat. Bring work safety equipment (safety goggles or glasses, dust mask, work gloves, knee-pads (optional)).

Other: Comfortable clothes for evening and touring around, sturdy walking shoes, sunscreen, sunglasses, 1L refillable water bottle, flashlight, mug, plate, knife, spoon, fork, money belt, day pack, bank card, English/Spanish dictionary, sleeping bag (optional – blankets and pillows are available but it will be cold at night), towel and bathing suit (for optional Hot Springs trip). Bedbugs are sometimes an issue; for protection, bring a plastic bed sheet (a thin 2mil painting drop cloth is a cheap solution).

*Laundry service is readily available, reasonably priced, and close by, but you won't get your clothes back until the next day, so be sure to have a spare set of work clothes.

Toiletries: Towel, toothbrush & paste, cup, roll of toilet paper, soap, shampoo (tea tree oil shampoo discourages head lice), lip balm with UV protection, hand sanitizer, ("wet-ones" or baby wipes come in handy for cleaning up when there is no running water)

Current passport with at least 6 months validity (photocopy your photo page).

WORKING IN THE VILLAGES

- Water – drink only bottled water, no ice.
- Keeping hydrated – bring 1 or 2 refillable, easy to wash water bottles.
- Sharing tasks and time together- volunteers take turns preparing lunches, food shopping, buying water, and preparing daily work groups. Lunch costs are shared.
- Photographs – ask permission to take photos.
- No candy for kids please.
- Day Bag/Pack when working in a village necessary and should include: water bottle, sunscreen, toilet paper, soap/hand sanitizer, and flashlight, notebook, pen/pencil.
- Gifts for families – coordinate with other volunteers/distribute at end of workday (no candies please).
- Dog safety – local dogs can be aggressive and dirty; pay attention and go with others to the outhouse or bathroom; stand your ground and have a stick or stones ready.
- Domesticated animals in cities and towns carry lice, ticks, etc – keep your distance.
- Religion – no preaching

GENERAL SAFETY in GUATEMALA

- For your security, don't travel alone; stay in groups of 3 or 4. It is not safe for females to travel alone at night, dress modestly. Always inform fellow travelers of your plan when going out and communicate with the group if you run into problems and/ or will be late for gatherings/ shuttles. This is for your safety and is simply a courtesy to fellow travelers.
- Keep ALL important documents (passport, money, credit cards, tickets) in a secure inside pocket to guard against pick-pockets or purse-snatchers.
- Leave your passport in your room if you're staying in a reasonably safe place. Carry a photocopy of it in the extremely unlikely event anybody asks you for it.
- Make sure your records of credit card numbers, issuing bank customer service numbers, and any relevant check numbers are in a safe place separate from your credit/debit card.
- Save all withdrawal receipts from ATMs until you have received your bank statement at home and everything checks out.
- Wear backpacks in front to avoid the possibility of it being slashed and emptied behind your back and be sure to keep a hand on the bag itself. If you sit down at a café, restaurant, bus station or stop, ensure a strap of each of your bags is securely looped around an arm or leg or an adjacent piece of furniture.
- Be very careful carrying wallets in back pockets, and keep an eye on wallets or purses carried in front pockets. While it is reasonable to keep some money in a wallet for the sake of convenience, don't carry much, and never carry credit cards or important documents in them.

- Drink purified/ bottled water, avoid ice cubes, close mouth in shower, brush teeth with bottled water.
*We purchase 20 liter containers of purified water for your refillable wide neck water bottles.
- Do not eat food from street stands/ always wash your hands before eating and bring hand sanitizer.

- Do not eat street food, raw, unpeeled, or unwashed fruits or vegetables, salad or lettuce unless you can be sure everything has been disinfected (ask server at restaurant).
- Beware! Pedestrians do not have any manner of claim to the road.

BACK HOME AFTER THE TRIP HAS CONCLUDED

Examples of ways to fund raise for the donation of stoves:

- Personal or family donation of a stove.
- Soliciting donations from extended family members, neighbours and co-workers (certificates are given for group donations of a stove)
- Organizing a small fundraiser such as a garage or bake sale, wine and cheese party, photo night etc., with proceeds going to the GSP
- Selling woven Guatemalan scarves or bracelets, which we bring back from our trip each year.

Examples of possible volunteer hours:

- Staffing an information table/kiosk at community events such as festivals, fairs, trade shows, and any other events that may generate funds.
- Arranging or attending presentations given to churches, schools, community organizations and groups.
- Assisting with volunteer meetings by taking minutes, sending out agendas, making up schedules for events, contacting members, etc.
- Translating GSP information into English, Spanish, or French as needed.
- Providing advice and expertise in the writing of grant proposals.
- Assisting with annual fundraisers by helping to book venues and entertainment, organize food, and staff information and ticket booths.
- Attending and helping to sell tickets for our fundraisers.
- Assisting with the organization of the silent auctions held at our fundraisers (Perth and Ottawa) by soliciting donations, writing thank you letters and setting up or displaying items and collecting bids.
- Assisting with the development of our website and online presence
- Creating display materials and ads

BASIC STOVE BUILDING VOCABULARY

STOVE PARTS

Stove.....	estufa
Chimney.....	chimenea
Stove-top.....	plancha
Door.....	puerta
rain cap.....	sombrero
stove pipe.....	tubo, pipa

MATERIALS + TOOLS

hoe.....	azadón (ass-a-DOAN)
machete.....	machete
mortar.....	mezcla (MESS-cla)
water.....	agua
bucket.....	cubo
cement.....	cemento
lime.....	cal
cement block.....	bloque
brick	ladrillo
paring.....	yeso
sand.....	arena
steel (rebar).....	acero
iron	hierro
gravel.....	padrina
screen (sieve).....	saranda
level.....	nivel
hammer.....	martillo
trowel.....	cuchara (also paleta or trulla)
wheelbarrow.....	carreta
shovel.....	pala
knife.....	cuchillo
tape measure.....	metro

MISCELLANEOUS WORDS

dust.....	polvo
to mix.....	mezclar
to put.....	poner
to give.....	dar
heavy.....	pesado
light.....	livano
hole.....	ojo
cut.....	corte
to cut.....	cortar
dry.....	seco
please.....	por favor
thank you.....	gracias
hot.....	caliente
cold.....	frío
happy.....	felíz
sad.....	triste
sick.....	enfermo
toilet.....	baño
be careful.....	cuidado
dangerous.....	peligroso
dog.....	perro
stick.....	palo
food.....	comida
good.....	bueno
bad.....	malo
hungry.....	hambre
thirsty.....	sed
tired.....	cansado
van.....	camioneta
clean.....	limpia
dirty.....	sucio