

Week 1

Sunday: Arrival to Guatemala City International airport. Transport to host families.

Monday (morning): Placement test, orientation at the school.

Monday-Friday: 4 hrs/day small group classes along with volunteering 2-3 afternoons at Obras Sociales del Hermano Pedro (see below for more detail)

Saturday-Sunday: Weekend excursion to Tikal or Lake Atitlan

Week 2

Monday-Friday: 4 hrs/day small group classes along with volunteering 2-3 afternoons at Obras Sociales del Hermano Pedro (see below for more detail)

Saturday-Sunday: Weekend excursion to Tikal or Lake Atitlan

Week 3

Monday-Friday: 4 hrs/day small group classes along with volunteering 2-3 afternoons at Obras Sociales del Hermano Pedro (see below for more detail)

Saturday: Departure from Antigua back home.

Volunteer Placement

Obras Sociales del Hermano Pedro: Public Hospital - Guatemala

This public social program started in 1980. It is housed in the old hospital, which was destroyed in the earthquake of 1976. With the help of private donations, the hospital has been rebuilt and now houses the following: Child and Infant Nutritional Recuperation Center, children with cerebral paralysis, invalid adolescents, adults with mental and physical impediments, geriatric ward. In addition, they have the following facilities: operating room, laboratories, diagnostic center, clinic, pharmacy, second hand clothing store and school for children with learning disabilities and physical handicaps. It is a place unlike any other – a multi-service facility providing a home and loving care for the elderly and orphaned, the mentally challenged, and the chronically ill. They currently have approximately five hundred beds (including cribs) and routinely provide a permanent home to more than 250 people ranging in age from just a few days old to over ninety years old. Most of the residents have chronic disorders such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, mental retardation, Alzheimer's, polio paralysis, deafness and blindness, and senile dementia.

You can work in the area that you are most interested in, or where your skills are most needed. Some areas include: Helping with mentally handicapped children and adults, assisting in the nutrition program, bi-lingual translators for medical teams who visit from the U.S. (occasionally), tutors or English-speakers for classes, medical students or doctors are greatly needed. Most of the work involves spending time with, and assisting in the care of the full time residents of the home.

Important Things to Consider:

- Must be patient and able to deal with very a difficult, emotional setting. Patients have severe physical and mental handicaps.
- Although this is a religious organization, it is not required that volunteers practice a certain religion.
- Medical students or doctors are greatly needed.

Weekend Excursions:

TIKAL

Spectacular Tikal, located in Guatemala's northernmost department of Peten, is a world of jungles, rivers, lakes, caves, colorful birds, monkeys, and even crocodiles. It is one of the most highly acclaimed classic Mayan cities with more than 3,000 ancient Mayan structures. These include temples, palaces, ball courts and a sauna, which can all be seen within the 550 square kilometers of Tikal National Park.

Archeologists have determined that the Maya first settled in this area as early as 600 B.C. During the Classic Period of Maya History from 300-900 A.D., Tikal experienced a golden age of architecture, art and written language but then mysteriously underwent a swift decline. Most of the structures and stelae seen at Tikal today date from this Classic Period.

Visitors can book accommodations right in the National Park. It is a mystical experience to watch the sunset and greet the dawn from Temple 4, the tallest structure ever built by the Maya. Also found in the National Park are interesting museums displaying ceramics and incised bones, a large collection of stelae and alters, and a photo exhibition documenting the fascinating exploration and excavation of Tikal.

As Petin is home to the Maya Biosphere Reserve, the largest protected rain forest in Central America, a trip to Tikal offers much more than a cultural experience. Composed of 5 national parks and three wildlife reserves, this tropical rain forest shelters 333 species of birds and 54 types of mammals, including jaguars. A stroll along the trails from one building to another offers the opportunity to view toucans, monkeys, coatis, ocellated turkeys, trogons, motmots and many other tropical animals. Visitors should try to spend at least two days to fully appreciate this magnificent city and its incredible rain forest setting.

TIKAL (continued):

2-DAY ITINERARY

Jungle Lodge Hotel

Day 1:

04:00 – You will be picked up at your homestay (between 03:50 and 4:15am) and taken to the INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT in Guatemala City.

05:30 – Arrival and check-in at airport, TAG counter.

06:30 – Departure for Flores.

07:00 – Arrival in Flores. Look for the representative from the HOTEL JUNGLE LODGE and present your voucher. You will be taken from the airport to Tikal by minibus.

08:30 – Arrival at Tikal. Check-in at Hotel Jungle Lodge.

09:00 – Start of guided tour of the park, visiting all the major temples.

13:00 – End of tour. Go back to the hotel for lunch.

14:00 – You are free to explore the park. Try to be there from 16:30 onwards to appreciate the increased animal activity as the sun goes down. We suggest Temple II as a good viewing point for the sunset. NOTE: The park closes at 18:00pm. If you are going to be in the park until then, make sure to have a flashlight.

18:00 – Return to hotel. You can eat dinner in the hotel (around \$12) or go to one of the comedores just outside the park gates (cheaper).

Day 2:

06:00 – Highly recommended. Get up early to go back into the park for sunrise. We suggest either Temple IV (highest, best view) or El Mundo Perdido (less crowded).

08-09:00 – Return to hotel for breakfast.

Free morning – you can re-enter the park or relax at the hotel.

13:00 – Check out of hotel.

14:00 – Depart from the hotel in minibus for the airport in Flores.

15:00 – Arrive and check-in at airport, TAG counter.

16:30 – *Depart for Guatemala City

17:00 – Arrive in Guatemala City. You will be met in the arrivals area and taken to Antigua.

18:15 – Arrival in Antigua.

* Please note that TAG in high season months might use a second flight, which is operated in a smaller aircraft and with slightly different departure times. We have been informed that TAG might change the departure time from Flores to Guatemala City to 18:00pm. This might cause longer waiting hours at the airport as your ground transportation Tikal-Flores will still leave at 14:00pm, unless confirmed otherwise by the hotel.

TIKAL (continued):

Included in Package:

- Roundtrip air transportation Guatemala/Flores/Guatemala
- All land transfers Antigua/Guatemala City/Antigua & Flores/Tikal/Flores
- 1 overnight at Hotel Jungle Lodge
- Entrance fee to the park and museum on 1st day
- Guided tour of the park (in English) on 1st day
- One lunch and one American breakfast

Not Included:

- Domestic airport tax (Q5 each way)
- Entrance fee to park on 2nd day (~Q50)
- All other meals, drinks, tips
- Additional transfers/guided tours

To Bring:

- Comfortable walking shoes
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Flashlight
- Bathing suit
- Towel
- Rain jacket

LAKE ATITLÁN

Few places in the world can match the spectacular beauty of Lake Atitlán, one of Guatemala's most prized treasures. Located in the highlands at an altitude of 1,562 meters, the lake offers a great climate, with comfortably warm days and pleasantly cool evenings all year long. Occasionally a strong wind called "xocomil" (a Tzutujil name) causes fishermen to scurry to the shore.

Geologists believe the lake began to form after a volcanic caldera collapsed some 85,000 years ago. Three dormant volcanoes - San Pedro, Toliman & Atitlán - form the spectacular southern backdrop of the lake, mute reminders of its volcanic origin. The lake itself covers about 130 square kilometers and measures more than 17 kilometers across. Maya-Kakchiquel inhabitants occupy half of the villages around the lake, while the other half of the shore belongs to Maya-Tzutujil people.

Activities around Lake Atitlán include swimming, hiking, bird watching, horseback riding, sailing, visits to museums, and a boat tour to the Mayan villages of San Pedro, Santiago, Santa Catarina Palopó and San Antonio Palopó. After a day of visiting these fascinating villages, most visitors are content to simply relax with a cup of cappuccino or glass of wine while watching the sunset over the world's most beautiful lake.

CHICHICASTENANGO

Market day in the Indian Highland town of Chichicastenango is a cacophony of sights, sounds and smells, which draws buyers and sellers from far and wide. Every Thursday and Sunday, the plaza of this Maya-Quiché is converted into this bustling market and packed with vendors selling traditional handicrafts, including hand-wove textiles, hand-carved masks, ceramics, jewelry and much more.

Visitors to Chichicastenango may also visit two unique religious shrines, important sites of worship for area residents. The first, Santo Tomas cathedral, bounds one side of the central plaza and was built in 1540, and provides an interesting glimpse into a type of Catholicism steeped in Maya ritual.

The other important religious monument, known as Pascual Abaj, stands on a small, pine-covered hill just a few minutes' walk from the cathedral. Pascual Abaj is a stone carved with human features, standing about two feet high and probably dating to before the conquest. Worshippers burn candles and incense near the stone deity, while praying for good crops and health.

Every year Chichicastenango celebrates its town fair from December 14 - 21. One of the highlights of this fair is the palo volador, a tall pole which young men climb before spiraling back to the ground, held by attached rope.

ITINERARY

Day 1:

06:00 – Leave for Panajachel – a minibus will be at your house between 5:45 and 6:15am.

08:30-09:00 – Arrive in Panajachel. The shuttle bus company, Servicios Turisticos Atitrans, will either take you to your hotel now or after the boat tour, depending on how much time you have.

09:15 – Atitrans will take you down to the dock and give you a ticket for the public boat tour. They will show you which boat to board (there will be no guide).

09:30 – Board launch for tour of 3 Mayan villages surrounding Lake Atitlán (San Pedro La Laguna (or Santa Catarina), Santiago Atitlán and San Antonio Palopó). You will have between 45 minutes and 1 hour at each village. Pay close attention to the next departure time before you disembark at each village, as the boat will not wait for you!

15:30 – Return to Panajachel and hotel. In the evening you are free to enjoy the sights & sounds of Panajachel. Recommended dining: SUNSET CAFÉ has good appetizers and Guatemalan cuisine. As the name suggests, it's a nice place to enjoy the sunset on the waterfront. As you leave the hotel, turn right and walk along the lakeshore until you reach Calle Santander, and it is located on the corner. CIRCUS BAR, which serves great pizzas, pastas and live music, is located in the northern part of Panajachel. Walk all the way to the top of Calle Santander, then take the fork, which is called Calle de los Arboles. Circus Bar is just ahead on the right hand side. There are also lots of other good restaurants and festive bars in this area.

CHICHICASTENANGO (continued):

Day 2:

07:00 – Breakfast (for you to arrange).

07:45 – Checkout of hotel. Be ready for the minivan in front of the hotel.

08:00 – Leave for Chichicastenango.

09:15 – Arrive in Chichicastenango. The minivan will leave you in roughly the same spot where you will meet to leave again in the afternoon. Make sure you visit the Iglesia Santo Tomás (5a Ave & 8a Calle) as it is very interesting.

Free time to visit and shop the spectacular Sunday market of Chichicastenango.

14:15 – Go back to the minivan.

14:30 – Leave for Antigua.

17:00 – Arrive in Antigua.

Included in price:

- Transport via minibus (Antigua / Panajachel / Chichicastenango / Antigua)
- Boat transport to 3 villages around Lake Atitlán
- One night in Hotel

Not Included in price:

- Other meals, drinks, tips

**Please note this is a sample itinerary information is subject to change.*