

SUPPORT TEAM HANDBOOK



Safe Passage
Camino Seguro

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WHAT IS A SUPPORT TEAM?

A support team is an unforgettable service learning trip for those who want to learn more about Guatemala, the community we serve, the work we are doing, and also desire to lend a helping hand.

Here at Safe Passage, we believe that the learning component of the trip is equally as important as the service that our teams provide. We believe that the interplay between both service and learning creates an amazing opportunity for our teams to gain hands-on experience in a developing community while at the same time, opening their eyes to how they can make a difference in the world around them

SERVICE

- Teams plan fun, educational projects and activities that they implement with different classrooms during their week with us.
- They also lend a hand in our English classes which gives our students valuable speaking practice.
- Finally, our teams spend a day at our Early Childhood Education Center, our preschool, where they also carry out educational and interactive projects with our youngest learners.

LEARNING

- Throughout the week, we provide the teams with historical and cultural background so they realize why this poverty exists, how the community has come to be, and what Safe Passage is doing to break this cycle of poverty and to bring hope to the many people who live around the Guatemala City garbage dump.
- An important part of the team experience consists of visiting a lookout to see the garbage dump where many of our families make a living by sorting through the trash and selling what can be recycled.
- Additionally, teams spend valuable time with our staff and volunteers discussing the different programs and projects Safe Passage is carrying out. In this way, teams gain new, more global, perspectives.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

During your week with us, you will get an in depth look at our educational programs.

EDUCATIONAL REINFORCEMENT CENTER

Students attend public schools, which is half- day, and come to our before or after school program for homework help, tutoring, and additional resources and classes such as English, sports, and health.

COLEGIO

In 2013, Safe Passage began its own full day school. It currently includes first through third grades, with expansion planned through middle school.

JARDÍN INFANTIL

Our youngest learners attend a full-day preschool, which utilizes a teaching methodology of learning through play.

ADULT LITERACY

The Adult Literacy Program gives adult family members of Safe Passage student's access to receive formal education.



GETTING STARTED

CONTACT THE SUPPORT TEAM COORDINATORS

If you are ready to start your own Support Team, you can contact the Support Team Coordinators at teams@safepassage.org. They will help you secure your dates and act as your main points of contact throughout the whole process. (207) 245-1185

The standard Support Team schedule runs from Sunday to Sunday and is the basis for the program price. However, many teams choose to extend their stay to do some traveling, relaxing, or Spanish classes.

Slots will be given on a first-come, first-served basis.

Safe Passage is closed during Semana Santa and in the month of December

Safe Passage can accommodate up to two single teams per week (or one Double Team).

Single team: 8-12 people

Double team: 16-24 people

MAKE YOUR DEPOSIT

Once a team coordinator has approved your team's dates, you can confirm your reservations by making a \$500 deposit. (\$1,000 for double team) This deposit will go toward your team fees later on in the process.

THE TEAM LEADER

Each team should have a designated Team Leader. This person will communicate with the Team Coordinators in Guatemala and circulate information and forms to all team members. All team member questions about Safe Passage should be directed through the Team Leader, who will communicate with the Team Coordinators in Guatemala.

It is the Team Leader's responsibility to complete the application process and arrange payment to Safe Passage. They are also responsible for communicating any team decisions to the Team Coordinators, both during the pre-arrival communication stage and while in-country.

The Team Leader should choose a name for their Support Team that is representative of their team members and use this name when communicating with Safe Passage.

The Team Leader is responsible for punctuality of all team members.

S/he is also encouraged to organize pre- and post-trip meetings as well as discussions or reflection activities throughout the Support Team week.

CHAPERONES

Teams including minors must include one adult chaperone for every three team members under the age of eighteen.

Chaperones should be in an existing role of responsibility over the minors, e.g. their teacher, religious leader, or parent. Chaperones are team members with additional responsibilities which include:

- accompanying the team to all activities unless a minor is ill, in which case a chaperone would need to stay and care for the minor
- taking responsibility for health, safety, and behavior of minors in the group
- serving as a leader and source of authority for non-chaperone team members

VISAS

U.S. citizens will only need a tourist visa to visit Guatemala. This is the stamp that will be placed in your passport at Customs in the Guatemala City airport.

For team members carrying a U.S. passport, no additional paperwork will need to be filled out prior to arrival. Mark “tourism” as “reason for traveling to Guatemala” on all forms.

For non-U.S. citizens, please check what restrictions Guatemala has for visitors from the country that issued your passport.



WHAT WILL IT COST?

The package cost of the program is \$595 per person based on seven nights at double or triple occupancy. If special accommodations are needed, please let us know by emailing us at teams@safepassage.org.

An extra night at double or triple occupancy is \$35 per person. An extra night at single occupancy is \$55 per person.

In addition to these fees, each Support Team is encouraged to make a suggested donation of

\$2,500 for a single team

\$5,000 for a double team

While the team fee covers only the services provided for the week, this donation goes to help Safe Passage stay in operation!



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Seven nights' accommodations
- Meals*
- Airport pickup and drop-off
- Daily private transport
- Saturday excursion with the students from your assigned classroom
- Administrative costs

*If the Safe Passage cafeteria lunch does not suit an individual's dietary needs or preferences (allergies, vegetarian, gluten free, etc), lunch can be purchased at the *comedor*, an informal restaurant next door to the reinforcement center in Guatemala City (for approximately USD \$4) or you can purchase packable lunch food in Antigua.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Air travel
- Travel insurance
- Lunch on the free day
- Leisure activities/ extra spending money
- Lunches and activities with sponsored children (for team members who currently sponsor a student)



HOW CAN I PAY?

CHECK

Checks for the deposit and the full payment should be made out to “Safe Passage” and sent to:

Safe Passage
81 Bridge St. Suite 104
Yarmouth, ME 04096

Please write the name of your team on the memo line of all checks

We prefer that the payment of the team fees be done in one check but it can also be sent as separate checks if they are all sent in the same envelope.

CREDIT CARD

We prefer payment to be done on one credit card as this reduces surcharge and administration fees. To pay by credit card, contact the U.S. Office at (207) 846-1188 with your card details and the name of your team. We can accept Visa, Mastercard, and American Express

CANCELLATION AND SUBSTITUTION POLICY

We recognize that changes sometimes occur during the planning of group trips. If, after making the \$500 deposit, your team can no longer make the trip, the \$500 deposit can be refunded up to 3 months prior to the arrival date. If not refunded, it will become a donation to Safe Passage. When a cancellation is made less than thirty days before the scheduled arrival date, we are unable to refund any costs paid (including the deposit and any other team-associated expenses already paid to the vendor in Guatemala). If a team member cancels within thirty days of the scheduled arrival date, the team will not be refunded the member’s costs. If a team member must cancel or if there is any change in the makeup of your team please contact your Team Coordinator to assist you as costs or plans may be affected.

If a team member leaves Guatemala early for any reason, no refund will be issued for this member’s costs. If for any reason Safe Passage deems it necessary to cancel your team’s trip after payment has already been received, all costs including deposit will be refunded or applied to a rescheduled trip.

MONEY TIPS

ATMS

- The most convenient way to get cash
- Notify your bank prior to departure of your travel plans to avoid emergency stops on your accounts
- Many ATM cards for small local banks will NOT work

EXCHANGING MONEY

- You will need your original passport in the bank to change money
- Banks are not open on Sundays
- You must be 18 years or older to exchange money
- The banks have a limit of exchanging no more than USD\$200 per week

CREDIT CARDS

- Contact your bank prior to departure with the dates you will be in Guatemala to avoid emergency stops on your credit card
- VISA credit cards are much more widely accepted than MasterCard
- The use of a credit card in Guatemala often carries a surcharge, and credit cards are not widely accepted for many of the purchases teams make during their stay

WHAT TO AVOID

- Cash advances from credit cards are not available from ATM machines
- Pre-paid gift or debit cards
- Travelers checks require a considerable amount of time at the bank and is inconvenient

MEDICAL TRAVEL INSURANCE

Safe Passage requires all team members to have medical travel insurance for their stay in Guatemala. As part of the support team member application, proof of travel insurance needs to be submitted to the Support Team Coordinator.

Note that most health insurance policies do not cover travel insurance, and so travel insurance needs to be purchased even if you already have health insurance. Travel insurance covers changes to your itinerary, emergency evacuation and repatriation, hospitalization, and medical care in case of illness.

Insurance companies, travel agents, and travel websites provide information about travel insurance. Choose a company that offers a 24-hour emergency number.

DRESS CODE & PACKING

DRESS CODE

The following is the dress code for Support Team members while volunteering at Safe Passage. Please make sure to bring closed toed shoes and long pants. We will provide you with two t-shirts and a name tag to wear throughout the week.

- Safe Passage T-Shirt
- Long pants (no leggings)
- Closed-toed shoes
- Name tag
- No visible tattoos or facial piercings



DONATIONS

If you wish to bring donations in-kind, please refer to our list of needed items: [In-kind Donations](#). Unfortunately, we are not accepting donations of used clothing at this time.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

CLOTHING

- Tshirts (we will give you 2)
- Sweatshirt
- Jeans/long pants- no leggings
- Underwear
- Socks
- Bathing suit
- Sandals
- Sturdy closed toes shoes
- Rain jacket*

TOILETRIES

- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Hand sanitizer
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen SPF 30+
- Razor & shaving cream
- Tampons/menstrual cup/pads

MEDICAL

- Regularly taken medicine
- First aid kit
- Anti itch cream
- Pepto bismol
- Immodium
- Pain Killers

PAPERWORK

- Passport & copies
- Debit/Credit card
- Medical Travel Insurance
- Guatemala Guide Book
- Spanish Dictionary

ELECTRONICS

- Camera & charger
- Mp3 player/ iPod

OTHER

- Daypack
- Sunglasses
- Umbrella*
- Reusable water bottle
- Snacks

*Rainy Season in Guatemala is May to October.

SAFETY & HEALTH

Guatemala is home to a profoundly inequitable society where many of its citizens live in poverty. Because poverty breeds insecurity and the children in Safe Passage are among the poorest in the country, the area in which the program is located suffers from crime. Safe Passage takes seriously its responsibility to make visitors as safe as possible, but there is an inherent risk in visiting our program.

We take a number of measures to ensure that all team members remain as safe as possible during their visit. Support Team participants travel in insured private transport and are accompanied by a Safe Passage Team Coordinator at the program at all times, and during the commute. Safe Passage does not allow any of its teachers, visitors, or volunteers to wander in the neighborhoods around the program. Each of the program sites employs a guard to ensure the greatest protection of our property and equipment, and safety of the children, staff, and volunteers. We maintain very strong relationships within the community with the children's parents, family members, other organizations and municipality. Ultimately, however, the safety of the team is the responsibility of its members.

SAFETY TIPS

Register with the U.S. State Department online before traveling.

Each team is provided a Safe Passage cell phone to use during their trip. It comes with pre-paid minutes and can be used to make calls within Guatemala. The phone will be programmed with important contact numbers. Charge your Safe Passage provided team phone and always keep it on you when traveling.

Safe Passage recommends leaving your passport in the hotel (i.e. in your suitcase or other inconspicuous place) and carrying a photocopy of your passport with you.

Use a reputable travel agency or Safe Passage recommended drivers when making your transportation plans.

Safe Passage is not responsible for the safety of your belongings. If you have items of great monetary, sentimental or personal value, please leave them at home.

It is best to minimize personal items brought into the project and to consolidate backpacks when possible.

Although Antigua is much safer than Guatemala City, theft is still a large concern.

Walk in groups and take cabs at night. Your Support Team Coordinator can give you the phone numbers of several safe and trusted taxi drivers.

Carry photography equipment and other electronic devices discreetly, and leave them locked in the hotel whenever possible. Bags should be carried in front in crowded areas, as bag-slashers and pickpockets are common in Guatemala.

If robbed, do not fight for your possessions; they are not worth your life or the pain and expense of injuries.

Do not carry items of value on you. Do not wear expensive jewelry and do not show large amounts of money in public. Avoid carrying credit cards and excessive cash.

HEALTH TIPS

A current list of suggested inoculations for travelers to Guatemala can be found on the World Health Organization's [website](#).

Be careful what you eat and drink. Use caution if eating outside recommended restaurants.

All restaurants used by Safe Passage are recommended for foreign visitors and offer reliable and safe food and drinks.

Do not drink tap water.

Use insect repellent to avoid diseases that may be transmitted by mosquitoes.

Wear sunscreen and drink plenty of water to avoid heat stroke.

If you become ill, please let your Support Team Coordinator know so that we can make sure you are getting appropriate attention and care.

The Safe Passage clinic is available to Support Team members to access while on site. While in Antigua, Safe Passage can recommend U.S. embassy referred health facilities.

Current information on travel safety to Guatemala can be found on the U.S. Department of State website at www.travel.state.gov.

YOUR WEEK AT SAFE PASSAGE

SAMPLE ITINERARY

SUNDAY

Arrive to Guatemala
Transport to Antigua
Dinner & orientation with Team
Coordinator

MONDAY

Tour of garbage dump
Tour of Safe Passage Programs
Meet students of assigned morning class
Assist in English class
Tour Creamos program
Dinner in Antigua

TUESDAY

Assist in English Class
Project implementation with assigned
morning classroom (1.5 hours)
Meet with Volunteer Coordinator
Meet with Tutoring Coordinator
Assist with English Class
Project implementation with students in
afternoon class (1.5 hours)
Cooking class in Antigua

WEDNESDAY

Lead activities at the preschool
Recess with preschoolers!
Learn about Family Nurturing Program
Dinner in Antigua

THURSDAY

Assist with English Class
Project implementation with assigned
morning classroom (1.5 hours)
Meet with Creative Expression Coordinator
Meet with Sponsorship Coordinator
Assist with English Class
Project implementation with students of
assigned afternoon class (1.5 hours)
Dinner in Antigua

FRIDAY

Free day!
Dinner in Antigua

SATURDAY

Excursion to Automariscos Water Park with
students
Farewell dinner in Antigua

SUNDAY

Depart for Guatemala City airport

CLASSROOM PROJECTS

Your team will have a chance to prepare and lead projects with two of our Education Reinforcement Center or Colegio classes and also with our littlest learners at the Jardín Infantil.

▪ EDUCATION REINFORCEMENT CENTER AND COLEGIO:

Teams prepare enough activities to fill up to three hours with two separate classrooms in our Colegio or Education Reinforcement Center or six hours total. Typically, this is with one older group of kids in the morning (13-19) and one younger group of kids in the afternoon (7-15). Your Support Team Coordinator will tell you which classes you will be working with. The three hour time period is typically split up over two days. You can choose to plan a long project that will take up both periods or shorter projects that can be divided between the days.

▪ JARDÍN INFANTIL:

Teams work with our preschoolers during their English through Music and Movement class. Teams should prepare enough activities to fill a 30 minute time slot. Teams will complete their planned activities with 4-6 classes of students between the ages of 3 and 6. It is important to keep in mind when planning and purchasing materials that teams will work with up to 100 students throughout the day.

PROJECT TIPS

Please purchase all materials for your projects in sufficient quantities to run the project(s). Some materials can be purchased in Guatemala, but please check with the Team Coordinators ahead of time to confirm that the materials are available there.

We recommend that you write a script or cheat sheet for your project! Because you will be leading the project in Spanish, having a Spanish vocabulary list of words you will plan to use in your activity is a good idea. The Team Coordinators will gladly review any lists before your arrival.

Your Support Team Coordinator will also be with you while you are leading your project and available to help translate, if necessary!

It is always helpful to do a run through of the projects before you arrive. This gives team members a chance to practice their Spanish as well as make sure the time that it will take to complete the projects is accurate.

We encourage teams to plan projects and activities that play on the strengths and interests of Team Members.



EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS:

Tower-building Competition (All ages) The team separated the classroom into 5 groups supplying each group with the same number of plastic cups, paper, balloons, tape, straws, popsicle sticks, etc. Each group was also given a certain amount of “money” to purchase more supplies, if needed. Within each group the students used their creativity and chose to build the strongest, tallest, or most aesthetically pleasing tower. In the end, the towers were judged and prizes awarded. This activity allowed the students to work as a team, be creative, fiscally responsible (prize was given to the team that could spend the least amount of their money), and have fun!

Potato Chip Experiment (Middle to high school age) The team broke the class into groups of 3-4 students. Each student was given two sheets of graph paper and two potato chips, of different brands and flavors. By laying the chips on the graph paper and crushing them, students could use the paper’s squares to measure the amount of grease each chip contained. Each small group tracked their measurements in a table, and took an average of their findings. Ultimately, the whole class was able to use the data they’d collected to accurately measure and compare the fat content (grease) in the two brands of chips, and discuss which one was better for them nutritionally. The activity allowed the students to practice math and science skills and to apply those skills to a relatable, real-life question.

Acrostic Name Poem (Elementary to middle school age) The team first asked each student to write his/her name vertically on a piece of plain notebook paper. They explained the concept of the acrostic poem: Write a word or phrase for each letter of your name, describing yourself or something you like. (For example, if your name is ANA, you could write Amazing, Nice, Apples). More advanced students could even use full sentences, or phrases that connected from one letter of their name to another. Once the students had their poems, they were given a larger piece of poster paper, crayons, and colored pencils. They each created a poster of their poem using letters and drawing as they wished. They were also offered magazines to cut out pictures of things that they liked or could relate to and glue them onto their poster. This activity allowed the students to practice vocabulary and spelling, while getting a chance to express themselves.

SUGGESTED CAMERA AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY

We have had great success in the past with teams who have decided to go “technology free” during their week at Safe Passage. This can range from no technology at all during any part of the trip, to no technology while at Safe Passage.

Past groups have found that it allows the team members to engage in the experience and be fully present in the activities. The students are not as distracted (remember, your team will be working in the students’ classrooms, smart phones and cameras detract from the educational experience.) Not bringing these devices to the project (or to Guatemala at all) greatly reduces the chance of having them lost, stolen, or damaged. The team members are more focused on why they are here- the kids!

Regarding cameras, past teams have chosen one or two people to be designated photographers for the day (or the week). Only the photographers brought their cameras to Safe Passage each day. This helped teams spend more energy on the activities and the kids, rather than trying to capture every moment.



FREE DAY IDEAS

More detailed information about free days can be found in our Team Leader Manual

Any of the activities below can be easily arranged in Antigua at one of its many travel agencies or in advance via the web.

PACAYA VOLCANO

One of Guatemala's three active volcanoes, Pacaya is less than an hour from Antigua and is best hiked early in the morning. It's an enjoyable climb and a fantastic view! (approximately \$20 USD per person)

GUIDED HISTORICAL TOUR OF ANTIGUA

Antigua is a beautiful colonial town, named a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1979. Navigate the cobblestone streets with any number of qualified, licensed guides. Elizabeth Bell offers a comprehensive walking tour of Antigua for a reasonable price. Visit www.antiguatours.net

MACADAMIA NUT FARM

Valhalla, a working macadamia nut farm and reforestation and sustainability project, is a short ride from Antigua. Enjoy a macadamia-nut pancake breakfast!

COFFEE FARM

There are several coffee farms near Antigua. Coffee from the Antigua area is renowned for its fragrance. Los Nietos, Finca Filadelfia, and De la Gente offer guided tours and coffee tasting. Finca Filadelfia also offers ziplining!

LAKE ATITLÁN

3 hours from Antigua, this breathtaking lake is surrounded by volcanoes. Spend a day in the eclectic town of Panajachel or take a boat tour of the many communities that dot the lake's

INFORMATION FOR SPONSORS

Child Sponsors may take their sponsored child out on a special outing during their visit to Safe Passage. Examples of outings include:

- Breakfast
- Zoo
- Lunch
- Children's museum
- Shopping trip

These outings are a great time for Sponsors to spend one-on-one time with their sponsored child, and are usually one of the highlights of the trip!

These outings are arranged by the Support Team Coordinators, through the Sponsorship Department. The cost of the outing, which includes transport and lunch for the sponsor, sponsored child, and a member of the Sponsorship Department, are not covered in the Support Team fees and need to be paid directly by the sponsor on the day of the event.



AFTER YOUR TRIP

Once you are back home, your journey with Safe Passage is just beginning! The U.S. office and local Friends of Safe Passage groups are eager to work with you upon your return to help channel your powerful experience working with the children into ways of bringing them continued opportunities and support. Some ways that previous team participants have stayed involved are:

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsoring a student or a mother is an incredible way to both support Safe Passage and stay involved and connected to people you may have met on your trip. Contact sponsorship@safepassage.org for more information.

BECOMING AN AMBASSADOR

With all that you have learned throughout the week at Safe Passage, you are the perfect candidate to become an ambassador for the organization. The Safe Passage Ambassador Program offers a way for like minded supporters to keep in touch and promote the mission of Safe Passage through outreach, events, and presentations.

VOLUNTEER

If you are at least 18 years old, loved your experience, and one week just was not enough, come back and spend five weeks or more volunteering with Safe Passage. Contact volunteers@safepassage.org for more information.

SPREAD THE WORD

You will have experienced some pretty incredible things during your week with Safe Passage and we hope you will share that with everyone back home. Write a blog post, contact newspapers, give presentations, encourage others to get involved.