

# SUPPORT TEAM HANDBOOK





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**YOUR JOURNEY TO A WEEK OF SERVICE AND LEARNING  
BEGINS HERE...**

*"We have work to do." – Hanley Denning, Safe Passage Founder*

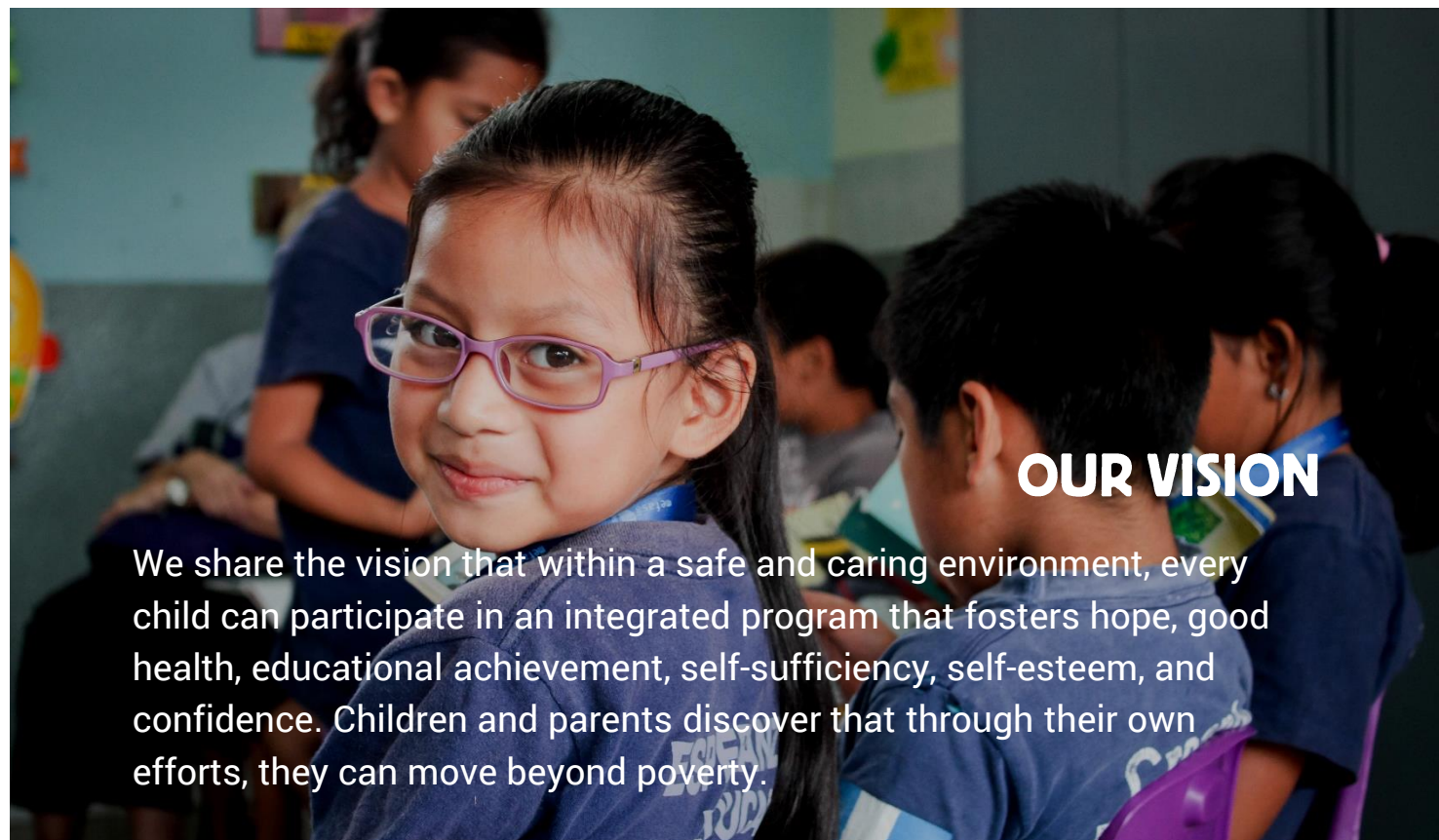


# WHO WE ARE



## OUR MISSION

Safe Passage works to transform lives by providing students in the Guatemala City garbage dump community with an excellent education, a higher quality of life, and pathways to a job with dignity so they can achieve a better future for themselves and their families.



## OUR VISION

We share the vision that within a safe and caring environment, every child can participate in an integrated program that fosters hope, good health, educational achievement, self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and confidence. Children and parents discover that through their own efforts, they can move beyond poverty.



# PROGRAMS

Safe Passage offers a wide variety of programs and services for the families of Guatemala City's garbage dump community.

## JARDIN INFANTIL (AGES 4-6)

Our littlest learners attend preschool at the *Jardin Infantil*. This program utilizes a Montessori-based methodology called [Planting Seeds](#) to provide engaging, interactive activities that foster self-esteem and confidence. Planting Seeds prioritizes experiential learning, allowing for students to develop life skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork.



## COLEGIO & BÁSICO (GRADES 1-8)

Our full-day primary school (*Colegio*, grades 1-6, *Básico*, grades 7-8) is accredited by the Guatemalan Ministry of Education and uses a hands-on, immersive methodology based on [Expeditionary Learning](#). Expeditionary Learning asks students to move beyond the classroom and work together on relevant, engaging projects that involve investigating issues in their community and beyond. “Expeditions” weave together science, social studies, reading, math, technology and the arts, and show the students how their new skills and knowledge can be applied in the real world. At the helm of our school are our teachers: highly trained, motivated educators who care about our students and understand the value of innovative, full-day education.





## OPORTUNIDADES (HIGH SCHOOL)

High school-age students at Safe Passage attend local public schools for the standard Guatemalan four-hour school day, then come to Safe Passage for supplemental programing and support. Our *Oportunidades* program offers homework assistance; English; health, library, and computer classes; extracurricular activities; and preparation for future internships and employment.



## OTHER PROGRAMS

Other Safe Passage programs and initiatives include clinical health services, social work and psychology support, *Próximo Paso* (Next Step) graduate program, adult education, and *Creamos*, a social entrepreneurship program that provides economic, emotional, and educational support to the women who live in the community around the Guatemala City garbage dump.

# WHAT IS A SUPPORT TEAM

The Support Team service-learning experience is designed with first-time visitors in mind, but many of our teams join us again and again, often with new team members.! While you have fun and learn about Safe Passage, you will also make a difference with the time, skills, and energy you share with the students, affiliates, staff, and volunteers at Safe Passage.

Support Teams are made up of 8-24 people who volunteer with Safe Passage in Guatemala for one week. During the week, Support Teams have the chance to meet, interact with, and build relationships with our affiliates while assisting in our programs. Typically, teams assist in English classes, meet with the women artisans of *Creamos*, work with our Operations team on a project, and accompany a particular class or grade-level on a Saturday excursion to a local water park. See page 15 for more details on what Support Teams do during the week.

The Support Team itinerary is planned from Sunday to Sunday, with dinner on the first Sunday being the first Safe Passage-scheduled activity and breakfast on the following Sunday being the last. See page 20 for a sample Support Team schedule.

Safe Passage's Support Team Coordinator will be your main point of communication and support throughout the whole process. To get you started, they will help you reserve dates for your Support Team and provide you with guidance and encouragement as you embark on this life changing experience! See page 13 for more information about how the Support Team Coordinator will work with you.

The cost for Support Teams is \$695 per person to cover expenses while in Guatemala. In addition, we suggest a donation of \$2,500 for single teams and \$5,000 for double teams. See page 10 for more detailed information about what it costs to bring a support team.



*Thank you to all of the members of the Safe Passage organization for continuing to work so hard for the families at the Guatemala City dump area. What a gift to all of us who have had the opportunity to become involved in some level.*

Ky  
Support Team Member



# FORMING YOUR TEAM

Support Teams can be any group of people looking to spend a week serving at Safe Passage in Guatemala. Past teams have come from schools, community and religious organizations\*, and groups of friends who want to have a life-changing experience together. Please note that all team members must be at least 15 years old upon arrival to Safe Passage.

*\* Although we welcome teams with religious affiliations, Safe Passage itself is a non-religious organization. Therefore, we do not promote any one religion and try to remain neutral out of respect for the diversity of religious backgrounds in the community. Teams are welcome to worship and pray with their fellow team members, but we ask that they do so outside of Safe Passage activities (i.e. in the hotel or during free time).*



## TEAM SIZE

**Single Team:** A single team consists of a minimum of 8 people and a maximum of 13 people.

**Double Team:** If your group has more than 13 people, you can come as a double team with a maximum of 24 people.

If you are a group of less than 8 people, please contact us ([teams@safepassage.org](mailto:teams@safepassage.org)) to inquire about joining or forming an Open Team.

## TEAM LEADER

All teams need to select a Team Leader to be the sole point of contact and individual responsible for the group and its decisions. The Team Leader will communicate with the Support Team Coordinator in Guatemala and circulate information to all team members. All questions about Safe Passage or the Support Team experience should come through the Team Leader.

It is the Team Leader's responsibility to ensure timely completion of team applications and team payments. The Team Leader will communicate all group decisions to the Support Team Coordinator, both during pre-arrival communication and while in-country. The Team Leader is also encouraged to organize pre and post-trip meetings to prepare the team for the experience, as well as plan or lead 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 18**. Chaperones are team members who have additional responsibility for the minor team members and should be in an existing role of responsibility or authority (e.g., teacher, religious leader, or parent). Additional responsibilities of chaperones include:

- Actively engaging in all events, serving as a positive role model for participation
- Taking responsibility to encourage healthy behaviors and choices related to the overall health, safety, and well-being of minors in the group
- Caring for a minor if ill and facilitating access to treatment with the support of the Support Team Coordinator, if necessary. This may include remaining in Antigua with an ill minor while the rest of the team is at Safe Passage in Guatemala City



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## BOOKING YOUR TRIP

Once you have decided that a Support Team Week is right for you and your group, contact the Support Team Coordinator ([teams@safepassage.org](mailto:teams@safepassage.org)) to check the availability of your team's desired dates. Once the Support Team Coordinator has approved your dates, confirm your reservation by paying a \$500 deposit (\$1000 for a double team).

Please note, Safe Passage is closed during Holy Week (the week before Easter), and from October until the last week in January for school break.



## RESERVING YOUR DATES

To reserve your team's desired dates, please contact the Support Team Coordinator ([teams@safepassage.org](mailto:teams@safepassage.org)). Once the Support Team Coordinator has approved your dates, finalize your reservation by paying the team deposit. Slots for Support Teams are given on a first-come, first-served basis. Safe Passage can accommodate up to two single teams or one double team each week.

## TRIP DEPOSIT

A deposit of \$500 (\$1000 for a double team) is required to confirm your team's reservation and secure your dates. The deposit is due within two weeks from the time the Support Team Coordinator has approved your dates. See page 11 for payment instructions.

If, after two weeks, the deposit has not been received or payment arrangements made, the dates will be opened for other teams to reserve. Hotel reservations will be made after the deposit is received. With approval from the Support Team Coordinator, team reservations can be changed until two months prior to your scheduled arrival date.

Your team's deposit will be applied towards the final trip costs.

The deposit is refundable up to three months prior to your arrival date. See the Cancellation and Substitution Policy on page 12 for more information.



“

*I have travelled with multiple NGOs and service programs within Guatemala. This was, by far, the most meaningful.*

Gail  
Support Team Member

# SUPPORT TEAM COST

The package cost of the Support Team program is \$695 per person based on seven nights at double or triple occupancy. Hotel rooms at single occupancy are an extra \$20 per night. If special accommodations are needed, please let us know by emailing us at [teams@safepassage.org](mailto: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.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Seven nights' accommodations at a trusted and secure hotel in Antigua
- Meals\*
- Airport pickup and drop-off in private, insured vehicles
- Daily private transport between Antigua and Safe Passage in Guatemala City
- Saturday excursion to a local water park with Safe Passage affiliates
- Services of your Support Team Coordinator, including translation and 24-hour emergency support

*\*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 near the project in Guatemala City (for approximately USD \$4). You can also purchase packable lunch food in Antigua. Please see page 25 for more information about managing allergies in Guatemala.*

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Air travel
- Travel insurance\*
- Activities and lunch on your team's free day
- Leisure activities and extra spending money
- Lunches and activities with sponsored children (for team members who currently sponsor a student). See page 17 for more information about sponsor visits.

*\*Travel insurance is required for all team members. See page 21 for information on travel insurance.*

## TEAM DONATIONS

In addition to these fees, each Support Team is encouraged to make a suggested donation of \$2,500 (\$5,000 for a double team). While the team fee covers only the services provided for the week, this donation goes directly to Safe Passages programs and services to our community!



# PAYMENT INFORMATION

All payments need to be organized through the Team Leader. For teams from the United States, we accept payment by check or by credit card, though check is our preferred form of payment as it greatly reduces fees incurred and processing time. Payment by one check for the total team cost is preferred but we will accept individual checks if the Team Leader sends all checks together in one envelope. Please write the name of your team on the memo line of all checks. Checks should be made out to “Safe Passage” and sent to:

Safe Passage  
49 Farm View Drive, Suite 302  
New Gloucester, ME 04260

For teams paying by credit card, we prefer to charge the total expense to one credit card, if at all possible, to reduce the processing fees incurred by Safe Passage. To pay by Visa, MasterCard, or American Express, contact the U.S. office at (207) 846-1188 with your card details and the name of your team.

Because international banking is constantly changing, we ask teams outside the U.S. to contact our U.S. office for the latest information on international payment methods.



## PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The \$500 team deposit is due within two weeks of reserving your preferred trip dates. Full payment of the remaining team fee (team costs less the deposit) is due 30 days prior to your scheduled arrival date in Guatemala. We greatly appreciate your efforts in keeping to the payment schedule so that our staff in Guatemala can focus their energy on preparing for your arrival rather than tracking down payments.



*Our trip really changed my whole perspective and I wouldn't change the experience for anything.*

Graham  
Support Team Member

## CANCELATION AND SUBSTITUTION POLICY

We recognize that changes sometimes occur during the planning of group trips. Trip deposits are refundable until 3 months prior to your team's arrival date. If your trip is canceled less than three months before your arrival dates, the deposit will not be refunded. It can either be applied to a rescheduled trip or will be considered a donation to Safe Passage.

The list of team members needs to be finalized two months prior to your arrival date in order to reserve the appropriate accommodations and send an invoice for your final payment. Final payment is due 30 days prior to your arrival. If a team member cancels within thirty days, the trip costs for the team member will not be refunded.

If, prior to thirty days, a team member must cancel or if there is any change in the makeup of your team please contact your Support 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.





# SUPPORT TEAM COORDINATOR

The Support Team Coordinator at the project in Guatemala will be the main point of contact for your Team Leader as you prepare for your trip, as well as your host as you experience Safe Passage during your Support Team week. We strive to take care of all the details and logistics for your time at Safe Passage so you can focus your energy on preparing your team to serve and be with our affiliates. We are here to make your trip as enjoyable and successful as possible so please let us know how we can assist you.

## HOW THE SUPPORT TEAM COORDINATOR WILL ASSIST YOUR TEAM

- Communicate upcoming deadlines and tasks to your Team Leader to help keep you organized and on track for your trip
- Be available by email and phone to answer questions and support you in your trip preparations
- Create an itinerary for your team and coordinate your activities at Safe Passage
- Arrange all ground transportation to/from the airport and to /from Safe Passage each day. Within reason, we can also help arrange ground transportation for your free day activities
- Make your hotel and dinner reservations
- Join you for dinner each evening, if desired, to ensure you have a positive experience
- Provide your team with information on Safe Passage history and context, and orient you to all program sites and team activities
- Orient your team to Antigua, including reliable ATMs, grocery stores, and trusted restaurants
- Offer guidance and translation during visit



# PRE-TRIP TIMELINE

Below is a brief outline of a Support Team preparation and action timeline. The Support Team Coordinator will provide your Team Leader with [detailed checklists](#) and reminders of important steps and deadlines throughout the planning process.

## INITIAL CONTACT (USUALLY AT LEAST FOUR MONTHS BEFORE ARRIVAL)

- Team Leader requests dates
- Once date availability is confirmed, \$500 deposit sent
- Team application to be filled out by each team member is provided

## TWO MONTHS BEFORE ARRIVAL

- Team members finalized
- Travel itinerary sent to Support Team Coordinator
- All team members have completed the team application
- Hotel reservations confirmed

## 30 DAYS BEFORE ARRIVAL

- Final payment for balance of team fees submitted
- Team donation sent to U.S. office
- Draft schedule sent to Team Leader for review

## ONE WEEK BEFORE ARRIVAL

- Final check-in from Support Team Coordinator

## VISIT SAFE PASSAGE

Yes, you did it! Enjoy your week, be proud of your preparation and your team, take it all in.

## RETURN HOME

Once you have unpacked and settled in, take a moment to reflect, and remember you are now a voice for hundreds of children and families in Guatemala. That's a powerful thing. Welcome to the Safe Passage family!



# WHAT SUPPORT TEAMS DO

Throughout the week at Safe Passage, Support Teams engage with affiliates of all ages – from our littlest learners in the *Jardin* to the women in *Creamos*. You will learn about Safe Passage and our programs while you provide valuable assistance. Team activities generally include:

## WORKING WITH PRESCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE *JARDIN INFANTIL*

This includes planning and leading an activity for our English through Music & Movement class and participating in recess.

## SHADOWING PRIMARY STUDENTS IN THE *COLEGIO*

Team members are paired together and assigned a classroom in which to observe our full day school programs and assist the teacher.

## ASSISTING IN ENGLISH CLASSES

As native-English speakers, you have invaluable expertise! Activities may include one-on-one support or group activities.

## LEARNING & CREATING WITH *CREAMOS*

You will meet our women-artisans, produce products with them, take a Mayan language class, and participate in a conversation with the women to hear about their experiences of our community.

## SUPPORTING OUR OPERATIONS TEAM

You will have the opportunity to “get your hands dirty” with our Operations Team, assisting them in crossing a much-needed task off their list. These projects might include manual labor, kitchen help, or packing monthly food bags for our affiliates.

## JARDIN INFANTIL-EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER PROJECT

We invite teams to plan a project for our English through Music & Movement Class at the *Jardin* (ages 4-6). Your team will work with three groups of approximately 20 students for 30 minutes each. Teams can prepare simple activities such as songs, games, coloring pages, crafts, etc.



*I loved working with the kids – having lunch with them, playing with them on the playground.*

Lisa  
Support Team Member

## JARDIN INFANTIL-EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER PROJECT (Cont.)

Here are some helpful tips when planning your project...

- Activities that are fun and educational make for great projects. Projects should be built on the strengths and talents of team members. Our students benefit greatly from getting to express themselves in new ways!
- Hands-on projects that engage the students are a good idea as they have wide appeal and will allow for greater participation through physical demonstration. The more interactive the activity, the better, especially if your team does not have high Spanish proficiency.
- Please purchase all materials for your projects in sufficient quantities. Some materials can be purchased in Guatemala, but please check with the Support Team Coordinator ahead of time to confirm that the materials are available.
- 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.



## SATURDAY EXCURSION

Teams have the opportunity to take an assigned group of Safe Passage students on a special excursion to a local water park on the Saturday following their work week.

This trip allows the students to experience a place that they would otherwise have little opportunity to visit. It allows your team to have fun with the students outside of the classroom and keeps the kids off the street on Saturday. This is often when the strongest bonds between team members and Safe Passage students are made!



## A NOTE ON SPANISH ABILITY

We recognize that limited Spanish-language ability can be a cause of concern for many teams and team members. Rest assured that even teams that spoke no Spanish have had positive experiences and meaningful impacts at Safe Passage! The Support Team Coordinator will be with you daily, acting as your host and translator. One of the most valuable things you will provide to our students is your caring presence. By simply being here, you communicate to our students that they matter and this can be done without words. Additionally, Support Teams serve in our English classes and provide valuable expertise. As native-English speakers, it is your English-language ability, not Spanish, that provides the greatest value to our students.



## INCORPORATING A SPONSOR VISIT

Many of our Support Team members already sponsor a Safe Passage affiliate. If you, or one of your team members, has a sponsor child or mother, you may take the sponsored affiliate out on a special outing during your visit. Examples of past outings include going out to breakfast, going to the zoo, going out to lunch, going to a children's museum, or going on a shopping trip. These outings are a great time for Sponsors to spend one-on-one time with their sponsored child or mother, and are usually one of the highlights of the trip! Sponsors may choose to go on these outings independently or may include other members of the team; multiple sponsors can also choose to participate in outings with their sponsored affiliates together.

Please do let your Support Team Coordinator know if you would like to plan an outing during your time in Guatemala! Outings are arranged by the Support Team Coordinator in collaboration with the Sponsorship Department. The cost of the outing is not covered in the Support Team fee. Expenses will be paid directly by the sponsor on the day of the outing.

## WHAT TO DO ON YOUR FREE DAY

The Friday during your Support Team week is a free day, allowing the Safe Passage staff to catch up on their work before your excursion with students on Saturday. There are nearly endless possibilities in terms of activities in Guatemala: things locally in Antigua or several hours away, things that are free or that cost a fair amount of money, things that are focused on simply relaxing or that are physically exerting.

We have put together a list of popular free day activity options that have been well-received by past Support Teams. You can [find those activities here](#).

There are also a number of reputable travel companies in Antigua that will gladly help you organize activities. These include:

- Voyageur ([www.cometoguatemala.com](http://www.cometoguatemala.com))
- Antigua Tours ([www.antiguatours.net](http://www.antiguatours.net))

*Please note that all free-day activities, including transportation, are not covered by the team fee. All free-day activity costs are charged by and paid directly to independent vendors. While we can help make some arrangements for transportation, Safe Passage cannot accept payment for any costs associated with your activities.*





# SAMPLE ITINERARY

## SUNDAY

Flight arrives, Pick-up from Airport and Transport to hotel in Antigua  
7:00 PM Dinner at Mono Loco

## MONDAY

7:45 AM Shuttle pick up from hotel  
9:00 Tour of Safe Passage & orientation  
11:00 Assist in English class  
12:00 PM Lunch  
12:30 Executive Director welcome  
1:00 Team expectations/bonding  
1:30 Assist in English class  
2:30 Gym class with middle school students  
3:20 Depart for Antigua  
5:30 Dinner at Cactus Taco Shop

## TUESDAY

7:45 AM Shuttle pick up from hotel  
9:00 Shadow/Assist in *Colegio*  
12:00 PM Lunch with *Colegio* students  
1:00 Bead making class with *Creamos*  
2:00 Mayan language class with *Creamos* women  
2:45 Panel discussion with *Creamos* women  
3:30 Shopping at *Creamos* store  
4:00 Depart for Antigua  
6:30 Cooking Class and Dinner at *Frijol Feliz*

## WEDNESDAY

7:45 AM Shuttle pick up from hotel  
9:00 Zumba with *Creamos* and Adult Literacy women  
10:00 *Jardin* recess  
10:15 *Jardin* English Project  
12:00 PM Lunch  
1:00 *Jardin* English Project  
2:00 Operations project  
4:00 Depart for Antigua  
7:00 Dinner at Rainbow Cafe

# SAMPLE ITINERARY (CONT.)

## THURSDAY

7:45 AM Shuttle pick up from hotel  
9:00 Assist in English Class  
11:30 Reading with first graders  
12:00 PM Lunch  
1:00 Conversation about next steps & team reflection  
2:00 Assist in English Class  
3:00 Recess with elementary students  
4:00 Depart for Antigua  
7:00 Dinner at Las Palmas

## FRIDAY

All day Free day! Enjoy exploring Guatemala!  
6:30PM Dinner at Café Sky

## SATURDAY

8:00 AM Excursion to Automariscos Water Park with affiliates  
6:30 PM Despedida Dinner at Sobremesa

## SUNDAY

Depart for Guatemala City Airport for Departure Flight

“

*I loved being able to meet groups of all ages – from preschoolers to the mothers. In a short time, I felt like I had an understanding of their lives.*

Rose  
Support Team Member



“

*We have tremendous gratitude for the staff, teachers, women, and children of Safe Passage for the unbelievable hospitality shown to us last week.*

Jennifer  
Support Team Member



# TRAVEL INFORMATION

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

*We require all team members to have a travel insurance policy for their time in Guatemala.* Travel insurance often covers changes to your itinerary and trip cancelation, emergency evacuation and repatriation, hospitalization, and medical care in case of illness. ***At a bare minimum, your travel insurance needs to provide international emergency health coverage and emergency medical evacuation/repatriation.*** As part of the Support Team application, each team member will need to provide proof of their insurance coverage. Below you will find a list of top-rated travel insurance companies. We suggest contacting several companies to compare quotes and coverage options.

Allianz Global Assistance  
[allianztravelinsurance.com/](https://allianztravelinsurance.com/)

Amex Assurance  
[americanexpress.com/travel-insurance/](https://americanexpress.com/travel-insurance/)

Generali Global Assistance  
[generalitravelinsurance.com/](https://generalitravelinsurance.com/)

Travelex Insurance Services  
[travelexinsurance.com/](https://travelexinsurance.com/)

Travel Guard from AIG  
[travelguard.com/](https://travelguard.com/)



## BOOKING YOUR FLIGHTS

Safe Passage cannot assist with flight reservations, nor do we have any preference on your flight route to Guatemala. With our team schedule running Sunday (dinner) to Sunday (breakfast), we suggest you arrive to Guatemala by 4 pm on Sunday at the beginning of your team week to ensure time to get through customs and arrive in Antigua before the team's first dinner that evening. If you cannot arrive by late afternoon on Sunday, we suggest arriving on Saturday to give your team some time to get settled before your week begins. The following Sunday, you can leave anytime but keep in mind you will need to leave Antigua at least 3 hours before your flight's departure.

## VISAS

For people 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 when flying to Guatemala.

**For non-U.S. citizens,** please check what restrictions Guatemala has for visitors from the country that issued your passport; we recommend doing this well in advance of your trip to ensure appropriate time for processing paperwork required to obtain your visa.

## MONEY MATTER

- The most convenient way to get cash is by using an ATM card with a VISA logo on the front. ATM cards from small local banks or that are not VISA cards may not work so please check with the issuing bank before travel.
- Contact your bank prior to departure with the dates you will be in Guatemala to avoid any stops to your accounts.
- There are reliable ATMs in the Guatemala City airport, as well as in Antigua.
- VISA credit cards are more widely accepted than MasterCard, Discover, or American Express. However, beware of foreign transaction fees with credit card usage.
- Cash advances from credit cards are NOT available from ATM machines in Antigua.
- Teams should not bring pre-paid gift or debit cards as they do NOT work in Guatemala.
- Cash in U.S. dollars (USD) can be exchanged in a local bank for Guatemalan Quetzales (GTQ).\*
- Exchanging Travelers Checks usually takes significant time at the bank. While they can be exchanged, they cannot be used for direct payments at stores/restaurants.

\*You will need your original passport (copies will not be accepted) in the bank to change money or Travelers Checks.



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## SAFETY & HEALTH IN GUATEMALA

We recognize that travel to Guatemala can be overwhelming for many people and teams have many questions about health and safety. Safe Passage has more than 10 years of experience hosting international Support Teams with roughly 20 teams each year. While there are inherent risks in traveling to Guatemala, we take every available precaution to keep your team safe and healthy. Here is some brief information and pointers on health and safety in Guatemala and during your time at Safe Passage.



## SAFETY

Guatemala is home to a profoundly inequitable society where the majority of its citizens live in poverty. The community in which Safe Passage works is one of the most disadvantaged in the country and, unfortunately, 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 minimize risks and ask that you follow all procedures and instructions given by your Support Team Coordinator.

Teams travel in private, insured transportation and are always accompanied by a Safe Passage staff member during the commute. Safe Passage does not allow any of its teachers, volunteers, or visitors to wander in the neighborhoods around the program.

Each of the program buildings employs an armed guard to ensure the greatest protection of our property and equipment, as well as the safety of the affiliates, staff, and volunteers. We also have external security that patrol the community. We maintain very strong relationships within the community through our affiliates, as well as with other organizations and the municipality. Ultimately, however, the safety of the team is the responsibility of its members.

### A FEW SAFETY TIPS TO REMEMBER

- Before traveling, register with the U.S. State Department online at <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- There are multiple options for phone connectivity in Guatemala. Team leaders are encouraged to ask the Support Team Coordinator about the best options to stay in touch and be able to access help in case of an emergency.
- Use a reputable travel agency or Safe Passage recommended drivers when making travel plans for your free time.
- Safe Passage is not responsible for the safety of your belongings. If you have items of great monetary or sentimental value, please leave them at home.
- Safe Passage recommends leaving your passport in the hotel (i.e. in your suitcase or the safe provided in your room) and carrying only a photocopy of your passport with you.
- Although Antigua is generally safer than Guatemala City, petty theft is still a concern. It is best to minimize items of value one carries. Do not wear expensive jewelry and please avoid carrying multiple credit cards or excessive cash. Be intentional about how you walk and manage your belongings.
- Leave photography equipment and other electronic devices locked in your hotel room whenever possible. When you would like to bring them with you, carry them discreetly.

## SAFETY TIPS (Cont.)

- Walk in groups and take tuk tuks, taxis, or Uber at night. Your Support Team Coordinator can give you the phone numbers of several safe and trusted taxi drivers.
- If robbed, do not fight for your possessions; they are not worth your life or the pain and expense of injuries. Should such an incident occur, please contact your Support Team Coordinator immediately.
- Dressing modestly may help to avoid unwanted attention and whistles.

Current information on travel safety to Guatemala can be found on the U.S. Department of State website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)



## HEALTH

- A current list of suggested vaccinations for travelers to Guatemala can be found on the Center for Disease Control's website: [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guatemala](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guatemala)
- We recommend visiting your primary care physician or a travel clinic for the most up-to-date and personalized recommendations for vaccinations and travel-related health preparations.
- Be careful what you eat and drink. Use caution if eating outside of 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 in Guatemala. Bottled water or water from an EcoFiltro is safe to drink. If a Safe Passage recommended restaurant serves you a glass of water or an iced beverage, it is okay to consume.
- Use insect repellent to avoid diseases that may be transmitted by mosquitoes, especially when traveling to lower altitudes.
- Wear sunscreen and drink plenty of water to avoid sunburn and heat stroke.
- If you become ill, please let your Support Team Coordinator know so that we can make sure you get appropriate attention and care.
- The Safe Passage Health & Wellness Center is available to Support Team members while on site. In Antigua, Safe Passage can recommend medical personnel and/or health facilities.



## ALLERGIES IN GUATEMALA

We recognize that some team members have food or other allergies that can range from inconvenient to life-threatening. We have successfully hosted team members with all sorts of allergies and severities in the past. Please make sure the Support Team Coordinator is aware of any allergies that might affect a team member's participation or present serious health concerns so we can make preparations well in advance. That being said, awareness of allergies in Guatemala is not as high as it is in the United States and we cannot guarantee you will not be exposed to potential allergens. Travel to Guatemala is at your own risk and team members will need to help take responsibility for their own health.

## VACCINATIONS

Along with travel-related vaccinations, we strongly encourage all team members to be fully up-to-date with recommended vaccine schedules. Please be aware the population around Safe Passage has varying degrees of immunity to preventable diseases. Team members should not rely on the community around them being immunized to avoid exposure.



# WHAT TO BRING

## SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

X	Clothing/Footwear	X	Toiletries	X	Medical
	Shirts (you will be provided with two t-shirts to wear at Safe Passage)		Shampoo & conditioner		Any regularly taken medication
	Sweater/sweatshirt/warm long-sleeve top		Toothbrush & toothpaste		First aid kit
	Jeans/long pants (the dress code requires jeans – no leggings)		Hand Sanitizer		Ibuprofen and/or acetaminophen
	Underwear and socks		Mosquito repellent		Pepto Bismol
	Bathing Suit		Sunscreen (SPF 30+)		
	Sandals/flip-flops		Tampons/Menstrual cup/ Sanitary Napkins		
	Sneakers/sturdy shoes (dress code requires closed toed shoes)		Razor/Shaving Cream		
	Rain Jacket				
X	Paperwork	X	Electronics	X	Other
	Passport & copies		Camera & charger		Day pack
	Debit/Credit Card				Sunglasses
	Travel/Medical Insurance Card				Umbrella
					Snacks

## DRESS CODE

The following is the dress code for Support Team members while volunteering at Safe Passage.

- Safe Passage t-shirt. We will provide each team member with two t-shirts at the beginning of the week
- Blue jeans (absolutely no leggings)
- Closed-toed shoes
- No visible tattoos or facial piercings. All tattoos need to be covered and all piercings, except ears for women, need to be removed or covered while working at Safe Passage. While we value your self-expression, often body piercings and tattoos are understood in Guatemalan culture to be indicators of gang membership, so we appreciate your cooperation with following these guidelines.

## OTHER NOTES ON WHAT TO BRING

- Be sure to bring at least one sweater or jacket, as it can be quite cool in the evenings.
- If traveling May through October, pack a rain jacket and umbrella as this is the rainy season in Guatemala. It often rains in the afternoons, so even if the morning is sunny, bring the jacket with you to Safe Passage.
- We suggest bringing at least one copy of the identification page of your passport

## DONATIONS

If you wish to bring in-kind donations, please contact the Support Team Coordinator in advance to identify what type of donation is beneficial to the program at the time of your trip.



*The Support Team experience gave me valuable insight into the issues faced by the Guatemala City dump community. It ignited a passion in me to continue this work.*

Ben  
Support Team Member

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## PHONES & TECHNOLOGY AT SAFE PASSAGE

### PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

Inside the walls of Safe Passage's buildings, you may take photos of the grounds, children, and staff. We ask that photos not be taken in the areas around the program buildings, whether from the shuttle, in the neighborhood, or looking into these areas from the program facilities. This is for your safety and to respect the dignity of the people who live in the neighborhoods surrounding our project. This also helps us uphold our strong relationships in the community, which serve to keep the children in school and our staff and volunteers safe. Whether in the project buildings or other places in Guatemala, always ask individuals if you can take a photo of them and respect the answer you are given.



## PHONES & TECHNOLOGY AT SAFE PASSAGE

Bringing cameras, phones, etc. is up to the judgment of each Support Team. 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 during any part of the trip, to no technology while at Safe Passage, or even no technology during team dinners. Groups express that being intentional about their use of electronic devices allowed team members to engage in the experience and be more fully present. Keep in mind that phones and other electronic devices not only distract team members from engaging with our affiliates, but can also disrupt the learning environment of the school. If distractions or disruptions become an issue, we reserve the right to restrict your team’s technology at the project.

Some teams choose to designate one or two people as “team photographers” and ask that no one else brings their cell phone or camera. This helps team members focus their energy on the activities and students rather than spending their time trying to capture every moment. Teams also get more and better candid shots of interaction this way rather than all selfies!

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## PRE-TRIP PREPARATION

Your time during your Support Team week should be the culmination of intentional preparation and learning, not the beginning. We suggest your team meets at least several times before your trip to learn about Guatemalan history and the events that have led to current realities, learn about Safe Passage’s work and the Guatemala City dump community, and set expectations about what you will be doing and how you will be engage at Safe Passage.

In our experience, teams that are intentional about their preparation and are clear about their purpose have a much richer experience than teams that have done little preparation. We are happy to help you think through a strategy to prepare your team well.



Here is a selection of articles, books, and videos, which cover topics that may be helpful in your preparation.

## ARTICLES & REPORTS

Guatemala: Encyclopedia Britannica Online

[www.britannica.com/place/Guatemala](http://www.britannica.com/place/Guatemala)

*Pay particular attention to the history from 1931 to the present*

A Brief Timeline of Guatemala

[news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country\\_profiles/1215811.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1215811.stm)

Human Rights Watch 2018 Report on Guatemala

[hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/guatemala](http://hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/guatemala)

Guatemala – Current News: The Guardian

[www.theguardian.com/world/guatemala](http://www.theguardian.com/world/guatemala)

## BOOKS

[Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala](#)

Stephen Schlesinger, Stephen Kinzer and John H. Coatsworth

[Silence on the Mountain: Stories of Terror, Betrayal and Forgetting in Guatemala](#)

Daniel Wilkinson

[The Most Beautiful Place in the World](#)

Ann Cameron

[Guatemala: Never Again!](#)

Archdiocese of Guatemala

[Robbed of Humanity: Lives of Guatemalan Street Children](#)

Nancy Leigh Tierney

## VIDEOS

[Manos de Madre](#)

A documentary about Safe Passage

[Recycled Life](#)

A documentary about the Guatemala City garbage dump

[Guatemala: The Dictatorship's Disappeared](#)

A documentary about the Guatemalan civil war and the continuing fight for truth and justice

[When the Mountains Tremble](#)

A documentary about the Guatemalan civil war and its effects

[La Camioneta: The Journey of One American School Bus](#)

A documentary about the migration of chicken buses from the U.S. to Guatemala and dangers, risks, and problems encountered on the buses.

## CONTACT US

We are excited to be a part of your journey of discovery and growth as you serve with us at Safe Passage. If you have questions, comments, or concerns please don't hesitate to reach out.

For questions about payments, please contact our U.S. Office:

**Kerry Palleschi**

**Donor Relations Manager**

[kerry@safepassage.org](mailto:kerry@safepassage.org)

For questions about trip details and planning, please contact our Guatemala Office:

**Brian Gregory**

**Support Team Coordinator**

[teams@safepassage.org](mailto:teams@safepassage.org)

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