

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2023



Safe Passage
Camino Seguro

Safe Passage transforms lives by providing students 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.

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BIENVENIDOS!

Dear Volunteer,

The Safe Passage/Camino Seguro community would like to welcome you to our school, our community and our team. As a new team member, we would like to help you prepare yourself for your role in the project as well as help you feel comfortable living and volunteering in Guatemala. This handbook has everything you need to know about how to get ready for this experience; it will help you pack, prepare, support you with health questions and understand what to expect from your work position on the project before you arrive.

You are important to us and so we are here to support you and ensure that you can engage with our community and be effective in your position. Whilst you are in-country, you will have 24/7 support from the volunteer office for any logistical needs on and off the project. Whilst at school you will report to and receive support from your department director as well as myself, the whole staff team and fellow volunteers; you won't have to look far to find help.

Thank you for choosing Safe Passage to support with your time, dedication and skills; we hope you enjoy your time with us.

Sarah

Sarah de Lemus

Director of Volunteering



WHO WE ARE



OUR MISSION

Safe Passage transforms lives by providing students 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.

We are a top-rated nonprofit school that has been working in Guatemala City since 1999 and is registered as a Pre-K through 9th grade school. Utilizing a holistic approach that expands the definition of education to mitigate underlying factors that contribute to poor educational outcomes. Our additional programs include educational reinforcement for high school students, health care, social and nutritional services. Our goal is to bring **hope, education, and opportunity** to the children and families trying to make a living around the city's garbage dump—one of the largest landfills in Central America.

OUR VISION

Safe Passage is an international model for how a transformational education of the whole child—focused on wellness, lifelong learning, vocational skills, and community engagement—can break the cycle of poverty.

WHERE WE WORK

Nearly 60,000 individuals live in the neighborhoods surrounding the Guatemala City garbage dump, among the largest landfills in Central America. They live in extreme poverty, often without running water or electricity. Many of these families survive and feed their families by scavenging and recycling items found in the dump. This is back-breaking, dirty and often dangerous work, which yields an income of little more than \$3-\$4 a day.

While children and youth in this community often want to pursue their education, to survive in the dump community, they must contend with the competing priority of helping to support their family, either by joining the informal workforce, taking care of younger siblings or family members, or even pressure to join local gangs.

Families with Safe Passage graduates earn nearly 5 times more income than families without graduates

Since 2006, over 223 Safe Passage parents have participated in our Adult Education Program

Since 2007, more than 159 Safe Passage high school graduates have celebrated program completion

10-15 families participate in our Family Nurturing Program each year to develop strong support systems within families



WHAT WE DO



Safe Passage works to mitigate underlying factors that contribute to poor educational outcomes and bring hope, education and opportunity to these children and families. By utilizing a holistic approach that expands the definition of education, we provide over 600 students annually with a combination of services:

Our full-day, Pre-K through 9th grade school sees an average yearly retention rate of 96%.

Our tutoring program in English literacy, computer literacy, job training, and career/educational planning for high school students. This program has led to a steady increase of college applications among our students by 50% and has enabled roughly 70% of our graduates to find employment.

Integrated Health Services: including basic healthcare, triage, and support from trained social workers and psychologists serving roughly 3,000 individuals annually.

Crianza con Cariño, a parenting program that teaches families about healthy relationships, nonviolent communication and parenting skills.

HOW WE ARE FUNDED

Safe Passage is a U.S.-registered 501(c)(3) organization and Camino Seguro is a Guatemala-registered non-governmental organization.

We receive no public funding to support our services, nearly all operational costs are covered by generous gifts from individuals, foundations, businesses, and Rotary Clubs. The Annual Safe Passage 5k also helps garner support for programs.

We receive \$70,000 - \$90,000 of in-kind, locally-sourced donations annually, including food donations which support our nutritional program: three meals and a snack for every child, every day.

Donations made by generous individuals to the Annual Fund support all programming within the school, pre-k through 9th grade, in addition to the “Oportunidades” high school program, as well as all programming within Integrated Health Services and Nutrition. Nearly half of the donors that support our work served as volunteers, are former Support Team participants, or visited the project.

As a volunteer, you’ll see and be part of all these programs. Volunteers have always had an invaluable impact on our ability to serve and support students and their families in Zones 3 and 7 of Guatemala City.

If you, your family or a friend would like to make a one time or regular donation to the Annual Fund or host a fundraising event for Safe Passage, please visit our website or talk to our director of volunteering, Sarah de Lemus. We can also put you in touch with our team in the U.S. Thank you!

VOLUNTEERING WITH US



Each volunteer role in the organization has specific requirements, please check the role description for the position you want to apply for to see them.

We also have some general requirements:

- Be 21 or older (please note, some of our summer school and virtual volunteering positions accept volunteers aged 18 or older so if you're younger than 21, take a look at those roles).
- Have a minimum intermediate level of Spanish language prior to volunteering (please note, some of our summer school and virtual volunteering positions accept volunteers with a lower level of Spanish, so, if you're interested, take a look at those roles).
- Be willing to commit to volunteering Monday to Friday and in some cases, Saturday morning.
- Successfully complete the required background screening on acceptance.
- Have medical or travel insurance, we ask that it includes emergency evacuation and that you consider choosing insurance that includes cover for Covid in case you are hospitalized, need medical support, a hotel stay or need to change your flight.

We understand that volunteering is a huge commitment and we want to recognise that.

There are minimal costs involved in volunteering with Safe Passage; they're explained fully on the next page. As an extra thank you, if you decide to volunteer for more than six months, we'll pay your full project costs for you!

VOLUNTEER COSTS

WHAT DOES OUR FEE INCLUDE:

Pre-Departure:

1. All your pre-departure information and support getting yourself to Guatemala;
2. A program manual and volunteer handbook to prepare yourself;
3. Your home-country background check needed legally to volunteer with children;

On Arrival:

4. Airport pick up on your arrival and a safe drop off to your accommodation;
5. Your school uniform: two t-shirts and a lanyard to keep you safe;
6. A welcome presentation, induction and your tour of our project on day one;

During your stay:

7. A safe, secure, supportive working environment;
8. Access to our onsite health clinic for any health issues; all contact with the clinic remains confidential;
9. Support from our department directors on everything to do with your role;

10. 24/7 support from our volunteer office onsite and when in your homestay and onsite support from the director of volunteering;
11. Three cultural activities to help you learn more about Guatemala;
12. Monthly support meetings to keep you informed and help with any problems you may have;
13. Transport to and from the project from Milpas Altas;
14. A certificate and recommendation letter on completing your volunteer program;
15. The option of applying for the Presidential Volunteer Service Award (US only).

WHAT OUR FEE DOESN'T INCLUDE:

1. Accommodation: We have trusted home stays in Milpas Altas that we have vetted and can confidently recommend however, your relationship with the host family is directly with them;
2. Your flight to and from Guatemala at the beginning and end of your volunteer period;
3. Your travel or health insurance.

Volunteering costs as little as \$4 a day for the first six months and is completely free thereafter!

Time Commitment	3 months	4 months	5 months	6 months	7 months	8 months	9 months	10 months
Cost in \$	\$540	\$605	\$670	\$735	On Us	On Us	On Us	On Us

LANGUAGE ABILITY

In order to fully engage and interact with our students, our staff and our community, we require all volunteers to have an intermediate level of Spanish. Being able to communicate confidently in Spanish in a professional work environment is vital to volunteer with us.

With that in mind, we do encourage you to interact with the students at all moments in English to give them as much exposure to the language as possible, this will be your greatest gift to them. Whilst living in your host family and navigating the country traveling on weekends, you will have ample opportunity to improve your Spanish and learn chapinismos (local slang)!

Many volunteers participate in a week or two of Spanish lessons prior to or once they arrive in Guatemala, before beginning their volunteer placement with us. We will be happy to help you set up some Spanish lessons if you would like to.



VOLUNTEER DRESS CODE

Volunteers are expected to look professional and follow the school dress code; this is for your own safety, the image of the school, and our reputation in the community. A volunteer found not to be following the dress code may be asked to remove items (earrings for example) or change their clothing. If that is not possible, they may be asked not to enter the community that day, for this reason, please review the following rules:

- Wear a Safe Passage t-shirt to school everyday.
- Wear your Safe Passage ID badge to school everyday.
- Wear full length, denim, blue jeans (no rips), no leggings, shorts, non-denim pants or skirts.
- Wear closed-toed shoes, no sandals or flip flops.
- No visible tattoos or facial piercings*
- No jewelry apart from a wedding band, please note there is a risk of theft in Guatemala, if you are worried about have your wedding band stolen, don't bring it.



If you are volunteering during the graduation period in November, you will be asked to wear black pants and black shoes to graduation.

* Whilst we respect self-expression and have no problem with these items, tattoos and piercings can be understood as symbols of gang involvement in Guatemalan culture, so we appreciate your full cooperation in following these guidelines.

PRESIDENT'S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

US CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS ONLY

Safe Passage is proud to be a certifying organization for the U.S. President's Volunteer Service Award. Through the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, this is a volunteer service award granted by the President of the United States to honor U.S. citizens for their volunteer service. This award honors individuals whose service positively impacts communities in every corner of the world and inspires those around them to take action, too; it is based on the number of volunteer service hours worked.

There are 4 levels of awards: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and the Lifetime Achievement Award depending on how many hours you complete with Safe Passage. Volunteers receive a personalized certificate of recognition, a congratulatory letter from the President and an official pin.

To apply for this award, please let us know on arrival that you are interested in working towards it and we will do the rest.



AmeriCorps



STAYING HEALTHY

MEDICAL TRAVEL INSURANCE

All volunteers are required to have medical insurance that provides coverage for emergency medical and disaster evacuation. You may consider choosing insurance that includes cover for Covid in case you are hospitalized, need medical support, a hotel stay or need to change your flight. Medical/travel insurance may be obtained from any number of companies online. You can also find some information about Health Insurance for International Travel from the U.S. State Department website, and we have included a few frequently used companies below:

- Travelex
- MH Ross Travel Insurance Services - Travel Insured International
- Travel Guard
- TravelSafe Insurance
- For the UK Coe Connections

It is recommended that all volunteers have an up-to-date tetanus vaccination. In terms of additional recommendations, a current list of suggested inoculations for travelers to Guatemala can be found on the website for the World Health Organization. Volunteers are also encouraged to follow any suggestions as provided by their physicians and may also consult the U.S. Center for Disease Control for travel health recommendations.

STAYING HEALTHY

MAINTAINING YOUR HEALTH

Here are some extra tips to help you stay healthy in Guatemala:

- Be careful what you eat and drink; until you are acclimated to the environment, you may want to avoid food from street vendors and the market.
- If you buy fresh fruits and vegetables to prepare at home, we recommend you peel or disinfect them with vinegar or lemon juice before eating.
- Do not drink tap water. Carry a reusable water bottle and fill it from bottled water or an Ecofiltro. If you have a very sensitive stomach, consider using bottled water to brush your teeth.
- Use insect repellent to avoid diseases that may be transmitted by mosquitoes, especially when traveling to lower altitudes like the beach. Zika, Dengue and Chikungunya are all present in Guatemala.
- Wear sunscreen and drink plenty of water to avoid heat stroke.
- If you become ill, please inform the volunteer office, so that we can make sure you are getting appropriate attention and care. If your symptoms include vomiting or diarrhea, be intentional about staying hydrated.
- The Health & Wellness Center is available to volunteers whilst on site at Safe Passage, please request help if and when needed.
- While in Milpas Altas, Safe Passage can recommend health practitioners and facilities, if needed.

STAYING SAFE

Guatemala is a beautiful nation rich in Maya culture, natural scenery, and centuries old colonial history. It is also a nation which has experienced a long and violent civil war, and occasional civil unrest can be expected. It has one of the highest poverty rates in the Western Hemisphere and a concurrently high crime rate.

Guatemala City is a large urban center with minimal environmental standards and pollution controls. The area around the Guatemala City garbage dump, where Safe Passage has its main sites, is home to some of the poorest of the city's residents. There, the living and working conditions are quite hazardous, due to the squalid environment, the rough and dirty work of garbage picking, the extremely high level of poverty, and the crime and other behaviors which accompany such conditions.

Guatemala is home to a profoundly inequitable society where the majority of its citizens live in poverty. Because the children in Safe Passage are among the poorest in the country, the area in which the program is located suffers from crime.

We take responsibility for our volunteers seriously, however, there is an inherent risk in visiting our program. We have established a number of safety protocols to minimize the risk for danger; however, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to adhere to these guidelines.

Volunteers travel in an insured private transport to and from the project. Teachers, staff, visitors, and volunteers are not permitted to walk around the neighborhoods surrounding the project. Each of the Safe Passage program sites employs an armed guard to ensure the greatest protection of our property and equipment, as well as the safety of the children, staff, and volunteers.

STAYING SAFE

A FEW SAFETY TIPS TO REMEMBER

If you are a US citizen, please register your passport and trip with the [Smart Traveler Program](#) through the U.S. State Department. If you are a citizen of another country, please consult your country's travel recommendations.

Keep your cell phone charged and always keep it on you while traveling and have emergency contacts programmed into your phone.

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.

Walk in groups and take cabs at night; use safe and trusted taxi drivers recommended by Safe Passage. Walk in groups and take cabs at night; use safe and trusted taxi drivers or Uber. Uber is well regulated in Guatemala so please use this over other, local applications.

Carry photography equipment and electronic devices discreetly, and leave them locked in your accommodation whenever possible.

Bags, backpacks and purses should be carried in front in crowded areas, as bag slashers and pick-pockets 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.

Carry only a photocopy of your passport on you and leave your passport at your homestay in an inconspicuous place.

Dressing modestly may help to avoid unwanted attention.

STAYING SAFE

Guatemala experiences occasional natural disasters including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, floods, and landslides. It is a good idea to contact your family if you hear of a natural disaster happening in Guatemala, even if you are not affected. There's always a chance they'll see something about it in the news and become worried if they can't reach you.

EARTHQUAKES

Earthquakes occur frequently in Guatemala and many parts of Central America, you are likely to feel a small tremor or two during your stay. Larger, more dangerous earthquakes are rare but possible and we have a robust emergency response protocol on campus with regular drills throughout the year.

VOLCANOS

Volcanoes don't pose an immediate threat to Guatemala City or the surrounding areas. The closest active volcanoes are Volcán Fuego and Pacaya although mostly they are just awe inspiring. There are many opportunities to climb volcanoes in Guatemala.

HURRICANES, FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

Hurricanes can occur in Guatemala but are rare and almost always during the rainy season but can cause flooding and landslides. Flooding and landslides can also occur during heavy rains and might affect your travels during the rainy season.

PROTESTS AND RIOTS

Protests, riots and manifestations are usually planned and don't happen around where you will be working and living. There are sometimes roadblocks on major roads but our transport will always keep you safe.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

DIVERSITY IN GUATEMALA

Please understand that volunteers of different ethnic or racial backgrounds may receive extra attention. Although increased tourism in recent decades has brought travelers from all over the world to Guatemala, the country and the community in which we work remain mostly homogeneous with limited exposure to diversity. Guatemala has endured centuries of discrimination and prejudice against the indigenous population. All of these factors contribute to Guatemalans not being as culturally aware or sensitive as you may be accustomed to. Nicknames such as “Canche” (blonde), “Negro” and “Chino” are not said out of malice but out of naivety due to lack of exposure to diversity. Volunteers in the past have used this opportunity to teach Safe Passage students about diversity and tolerance.

RESPECTING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

When not at work but in other areas in Guatemala, always ask individuals if you can take a photo of them and respect the answer you are given. Always try to be respectful about taking photos of locals, especially children. Imagine if a foreign, unknown person tried to take your photo and how you'd feel about that before taking photos of people. Respect children's rights to their image and, if given permission to take the photo, don't upload photos of children to social media. Children have had photos taken by foreigners in Guatemala and then been abducted so people are nervous and suspicious of foreigners taking photos of children, even with their permission. While it is rare, violence has resulted from some of these situations. You may be asked for a fee to take a photo of an individual. This is not unreasonable; many Guatemalans assume (often correctly) that foreigners have an opportunity to benefit financially from their image, and so they would like a cut of the real or imagined profits.

MONEY MATTERS



NAVIGATING INTERNATIONAL BANKING

- Contact your bank prior to departure with the dates you will be in Guatemala to avoid emergency stops on your accounts.
- The most convenient place to get cash out is using an ATM card that has a Cirrus or PLUS system logo on the back, preferably with a VISA logo on the front. ATM cards for small, local banks that don't have these logos will not work in Guatemala. It's a good idea to check in with your bank and be well prepared.
- ATMs are becoming more and more readily available but if you are traveling far then do take cash with you and don't leave it to your last cash to go to the ATM unless it's not working or not been replenished.
- VISA is much more widely accepted than Mastercard and you may have to pay a surcharge for using a card.
- Credit card cash advances will not work in Guatemala.
- Traveler's Checks must be exchanged in a bank and take a long time to process, they are not very convenient.
- You can exchange US dollars in a bank but you will need your original passport and the notes must be brand new with no bends or tears.
- Banks are not open on Saturday afternoon or Sundays unless you go to a mall.

TRAVEL/GETTING HERE

PASSPORTS

Passports need to be valid for a minimum of six months from date of entry. If your plans might include an extended stay, it's a good idea to have a longer validity on your passport prior to your arrival.

VISAS

U.S, Canada, Europe, Australia, the UK and many other country citizens will only need 'Category A' 90-day tourist visa to visit Guatemala. This is the stamp that will be added to your passport at customs in the airport or at the border. For volunteers carrying a passport from these countries you will only need to fill in customs papers on your arrival flight or on arrival in Guatemala, bring a pen in your hand luggage for this. Mark 'tourism' as your reason for traveling on all paperwork. Always check on arrival that your stamp states '90 dias' so you don't unexpectedly find yourself outside your visa time.

If you are staying longer than 90 days, you can extend your visa in-country for a further 90 days or take a few days to travel to another country (please note, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua are within the same visa and don't count to renew your visa). If you renew your visa in-country for a further 90 days, you must leave for 72 hours after the 180 days before coming back and continuing your stay.

Please check your visa status with the closest Guatemalan Consulate before buying your flight.

HOUSING INFORMATION

MILPAS ALTAS, SACATEPÉQUEZ

We've chosen two beautiful, quiet, traditional Guatemalan towns next door to each other called Santo Tomas Milpas Altas and Magdalena Milpas Altas to host our volunteers. These two mountainous towns are surrounded by nature and allow you to fully immerse yourself in the culture, language and life in Guatemala.

It is thought that the towns originated from the Kakchiquel indigenous population although much of that has been lost as they have modernised. Up until the 1950s, Kakchiquel was the main language spoken but now it is Spanish as 94% of the population is non-indigenous.

The townspeople are mainly Catholic but there is also an evangelical population and there are a few different churches to see especially from the central park. The patron saint of Santo Tomas is celebrated in December with a town party organised by the local government.

Sitting about 20 minutes from Antigua and 45 minutes from our project, these towns are surrounded by nature with Parque Ecológico Florencia to the north and Parque Ecológico Corazón de Agua to the south, perfect places to go walking.

Santo Tomas and Magdalena have all the basic amenities you'll need: a supermarket, a local market, corner shops, stationery shops and coffee shops, a gym, restaurants, a pharmacy and local health clinic.

It's local dish is Pepian, a thick meat stew, made today with red meat, chicken or just vegetables, made with tomatoes, seeds and chili. It's one of the oldest and most recognised maya dishes in Guatemalan cuisine. We'll make sure you have a taste before you leave!



HOMESTAY FAMILIES

MILPAS ALTAS, SACATEPÉQUEZ

Your accommodation is not included as part of your volunteer cost to allow you to choose to live in whatever accommodation you prefer however, all volunteers stay in Milpas Altas so they can be picked up and dropped off in the bus each day. We will happily support you find accommodation in the area but we have built relationships with local homestays that have been checked and approved and we would love to put you in contact with one of them.

Our host families are considered part of the middle class in Guatemala and live comfortable, happy lives. Family is a huge part of Guatemalan culture and identity so you'll find yourself welcomed to be part of their extended family from the off.

Santo Tomas is a small town so the families will be able to tell you where to find everything you need and more. Most of the families have two rooms or are very close to other families so you'll find yourself close or living with other volunteers. Even so, this will be the perfect opportunity to practice and improve your Spanish so take advantage of it. Please note, it isn't usual for families in more traditional towns to have such easy access to internet.

At the homestay, you will be offered a private room with a bed and furniture. There will be a shared bathroom with hot water, a shower and toilet. There will be communal space you can use which will vary between host families but may be a lounge, dining room, terrace or patio. You will be provided with a snack and three meals each day, when you go to school your lunch and snack will be provided as a packed lunch.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

X	Clothing/Footwear	X	Toiletries	X	Medical
	Dress Code: You will be provided with two t-shirts to wear at the project.		Shower gel		Any regularly taken medication
	Dress Code: Long denim blue jeans NO leggings or shorts		Shampoo /conditioner		Ibuprofen or Acetaminophen
	Dress Code: Sneakers, close toed shoes only		Toothbrush /toothpaste		Pepto Bismol
	Sweatshirt/warm long sleeve top *layering works best		Hand sanitizer		Imodium AD
	A week's worth of underwear and socks		Tampons/menstrual cup/ sanitary napkins		First aid kit
	Sandals/flip flops		Razor/shaving Cream		Anti itch cream Antiseptic ointment
	Clothes to wear when you are not working. Layering works best.				
	Bathing Suit				Mosquito repellent
	Rain Jacket *Rainy Season in Guatemala is May to October.				Sunscreen SPF 30+
X	Paperwork	X	Electronics	X	Other
	Passport + copies		Chargers for all electronics *adapter not needed for Guatemala		Day pack
	Travel/Medical Insurance + copies		Computer / iPad		Water bottle
	Debit/Credit Card		Mp3 player / iPod		Umbrella*
	Guatemala Guidebook		Camera		

SAFETY OF AFFILIATES, PERSONAL PHOTOS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

We work with vulnerable people and so we follow the strict rules listed below to ensure the safety and protection of these people.

Staff and volunteers are not permitted to take photos of the students or families for personal use (on their own cameras or phones). It is strictly forbidden to take photos of the students and upload them to any social media or website.

Families receive education and services through Safe Passage/Camino Seguro with the understanding that their lives will not be on display. It is your responsibility as volunteers to respect the affiliates through words and actions.

Each parent signs a waiver to allow Safe Passage staff to take photos of the students for professional, institutional use. However, no individual is, legally, permitted to take photos of affiliates or upload them to social media or to a website.

We ask that photos not be taken in the areas around the program buildings either, whether from the shuttle, while in the areas, 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.

If you would like to create a formal video or write an article, conduct a school project, broadcast, or other form of public dissemination about Safe Passage, please talk to the volunteer office. We will be happy to connect you with the public relations department who will then be able to provide you with additional information to support your efforts to publicize your experience.

In addition to this, under no circumstances will a volunteer be left alone with an affiliate without supervision, or visit a child's home or school, unless accompanied by a member of the project's staff.

GUATEMALA'S HISTORY

Below is a selection of books and films that highlight different areas of Guatemala's history.

ARTICLES & REPORTS

[Life in a Landfill](#)

[Guatemala Profile—Timeline](#) BBC News

[Guatemala Country Profile](#) - BBC News

BOOKS

The following books will give you a real insight into Guatemala. We have a weekly book club where we get together with the English teachers to talk about the books we are reading and share thoughts and ideas.

Angel of the Garbage Dump: How Hanley Denning changed the world one child at a time

Written by Jacob Wheeler, *Angel of the Garbage Dump* tells how Hanley Denning pulled thousands of children out of the desperate Guatemala City garbage dump and gave them a Safe Passage.

I, Rigoberta Menchu by Rigoberta Menchu

Written by an Indian woman in Guatemala who attempts to draw attention to the atrocities of the Guatemalan military regime during the 36-year civil war. Rigoberta received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.

El Señor Presidente (Mr. President) by Miguel Ángel Asturias

A political satire that reveals the true horrors of life under a totalitarian government, the original Latin American dictator novel and pioneering work of magical realism. Miguel Ángel Asturias won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1967.

The Art of Political Murder by Fransisco Goldman

This is a tense and astonishing true detective story that opens a window on the new Latin American reality of mara youth gangs and organized crime, and tells the story of a remarkable group of engaging, courageous young people, and of their remarkable fight for justice.

Testimony - Death of a Guatemalan Village by Victor Montejo

An eyewitness account by a Guatemalan primary school teacher detailing one instance of violent conflict between the indigenous Maya people and the army. This vital and essential record captures how Guatemala's 36-year civil war, which reached its most violent peak in the 1980s, ripped the traditional fabric of Guatemalan society.

GUATEMALA'S HISTORY

Bitter Fruit by Stephen Schlesinger & Stephen Kinzer

The story of the American Coup in Guatemala is a powerful and insightful account of the CIA operation to overthrow the democratically elected Guatemalan government Jacobo Arbenz, leading to the 36-year civil war.

La Hija de la Puma by Monica Zak - also available as a film

Novel based on true events that tells the intense story of Ashlop, an indigenous Chuj girl who returns to Guatemala from a refugee camp in Chiapas to look for the survivors of her family.

Robbed of Humanity: Lives of Guatemalan Street Children by Nancy Leigh Tierney

This book delves into the socio-economic and cultural aspects of Guatemala's homeless street youth, and includes intimate personal interviews with young women who have grown-up on the streets of Guatemala City.

FILMS

When The Mountains Tremble - Directed by Pamela Yates and Newton Thomas Sigel

A documentary starring Rigoberta Menchú on the war between the Guatemalan military and the Mayan population.

Ixcánul - Directed by Jayro Bustamante

On the slopes of an active volcano in Guatemala, a marriage is arranged for seventeen-year-old María by her Kaqchikel parents; however, she dreams of a future with someone else in a different country.

La Camioneta - Directed by Mark Kendall.

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

La Hija de la Puma - Monica Zak - also available as a film Also available as a film on YouTube in sections.

El Viaje SODEJU - Directed by Luis Cruz, Dario López and Edgar Barillas.

A story of two youths and their journey to the city for work opportunities, it shows a realistic view-point of Guatemala's youth today and is acted by local mayan Guatemalans. Available on YouTube with subtitles in Spanish.

GUATEMALA'S HISTORY

El Silencio de Neto - Directed by Luis Argueta

Set during the 1954 American-led military coup to overthrow Guatemalan president Jacobo Árbenz, this coming-of-age tale follows a young boy, Neto, who dreams of one day flying in a hot air balloon. Available YouTube with English subtitles/

Books to understand more about poverty in general:

Poor Economics: A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo

Poor Economics lays out the middle ground between purely market-based solutions to global poverty, versus “grand development plans.”

Good Economics for Hard Times: Better Answers to Our Biggest Problems

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo

Original, provocative, and urgent, it makes a persuasive case for intelligent forms of intervention, based on sound research into real-life situations; and a society built on compassion and respect.

80-20 Development in an Unequal World

New Internationalist

Introduces, explores and challenges key issues and daily realities in human development, human rights and sustainability in our increasingly unequal world.

If you are interested in studying the challenges and solutions to world poverty, there's a free 12-week course on MITx Online called The Challenges of Global Poverty.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Volunteer support staff numbers

Director of Volunteering (not 24 hours): Cell: (502) 5571-5167
Volunteer Department email: volunteers@safepassage.org

To make phone calls to Guatemala

From an International destination use the country code 502.

From the United States: 0 11 (502) and the eight digit number.

From anywhere else in the world: 00 (502) and then the 8 digit number.

To make local calls within Guatemala, simply dial the 8-digit number directly.

Emergency numbers

Policia Nacional Civil (National Police) – Tel: 110 and 120

Ambulancias IGSS (Ambulance) – Tel: 128

All volunteers must have their Embassy's number in their cell phone:

U.S. - 2326-4000 and 2331-2354

Canada - 00 502 2363-4348

British - 00 502 2380-7300

Mailing Address - US Office

Safe Passage

49 Farm View Drive

Raymond Hall Suite 302

New Gloucester, ME 04260

At this time, there is no mail service in Guatemala. Should a need arise, volunteers may use the US Office address; the staff will do their best to coordinate with the next individual or group traveling from Maine to Guatemala, so that the volunteer's item may be transported in this manner. However, this is no guarantee.

For emergency mailing you can use an international courier service like DHL and pick it up from their central offices.