

FAQs

Tree 4 Hope Travelers to Guatemala

How much does a trip cost? 8-day trips cost \$750, not including airfare. 11-day trips (including Elder Center) cost \$950. This includes hotel, ground transportation and airport transfers, team T-shirt and all meals except for one lunch.

What is a typical day like? What do we do while we are there? After breakfast, we are picked up by our drivers who take us to the orphanages. We work there until 5pm. Projects often include painting, repairs and anything we are asked to help with. We also spend time with the kids. Group members often offer their special talents to the kids, by teaching a craft or ESL or a sport. The kids love when we play with them and give them special attention.

Will we receive a schedule for the week? There is no predetermined schedule. The orphanage directors (Karen & Estuardo) give us the general outline of what needs to be done during the week, but it is important to remember that things don't always go as planned in Guatemala. We try to do our best to meet their needs, while seeking to respect their culture and remembering we are guests in their country. We must remember that we are not there to change things.

Where do we sleep? We sleep in Antigua, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, approx. 40 min. drive from the orphanages. We generally occupy triple and quadruple rooms. Each traveler has their own bed. Each room has a bathroom. Double and single rooms are available for an extra charge.

Is it safe? Guatemalans are very friendly and hospitable overall. Antigua has a visible police presence since there are many tourists there. We recommend that group members walk in groups of 3 or more as a safety measure. Petty crimes are mostly pickpocketing, but we haven't had problems. The entrance to our hotel is guarded 24/7 and the main entrance is kept locked at night.

What about electricity? Outlets and current is the same as ours at home. Your chargers will work.

Can I use my phone? Check with your phone company regarding their international terms. Each contract is different. My Sprint plan works in Guatemala, but it requires a set-up before traveling. Your phone probably will not work in Guatemala unless you set it up in advance with your supplier. There is free wi-fi at our hotel. In the evenings, you will be able to connect to the internet.

Should I worry about malaria and other mosquito-borne illnesses? We stay at high altitudes where mosquito-borne illnesses are very rare. Bring insect repellent as a precaution.

Are vaccines necessary? There are no requirements. A valid tetanus shot is highly recommended. Hepatitis A and B vaccines are also good ideas. Check with your doctor for expert advice.

Other health risks? Bottled water is a necessity! Bring a reusable bottle from home to take to the orphanage each day. Our hotel provides filtered water for us to refill our bottles. Plan to brush your teeth with bottled water. We use a reputable restaurant with good food-handling practices for all of our meals. Hand sanitizer is recommended when at the orphanage.

I don't speak Spanish. Is this a problem? Basic Spanish is nice to know, but it is not necessary to speak Spanish to travel with us. Smiles are universal! If you want to brush up on basic Spanish beforehand, practice some phrases on www.duolingo.com for free!

Is this a religious trip? Church groups often travel with us, and are welcome to lead worship services if they wish. Tree 4 Hope does not lead organized religious activities.

How can I get Guatemalan money? You can use your ATM card to withdraw Guatemalan currency from banks there. It is important that you contact your bank BEFORE you travel, to let them know the dates you will be there and that you plan to use your ATM card. You will also need to alert your credit card company if you intend to charge anything. Some merchants accept US \$, but the bills must be very clean and new. Plan to bring some spending money for any activities you choose to do on your free day.

What clothes should I bring? Check our packing list. Prepare to wear long pants - Guatemalans are modest. During the day, you will probably be comfortable in a T-shirt. At night, a sweater or jacket is nice. Our hotel has a laundry service for a small fee.

What's the key to a successful trip? Although every group is different, Tree 4 Hope strives to create a positive, respectful environment where all members work together to do what is best for the group as a whole. We are all volunteers here, including your trip leader. If you work hard, help others, open your arms to the kids, and laugh through all of the unexpected surprises of Guatemala, you'll make this trip the best it can be. We love seeing faces that come back year after year with a smile.