OPERATION GROUNDSWELL PRESENTS GUATEMALA: SEED TO SHELF
The best week of your life is about to begin. This package will get you stoked and fill you in on everything you need to know about Operation Groundswell and your region.

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WE’RE SPARKING A MOVEMENT OF GLOBALLY ACTIVE & SOCIA LLY CONSCIOUS BACKPACKTIVISTS.
BACKPACKING WITH A PURPOSE IS ABOUT BEING CONSCIOUS AND CRITICAL OF OUR IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITIES THAT WE TRAVEL TO.

OUR APPROACH

Operation Groundswell is a collaborative organization. It’s in our DNA. Which is why over the past couple years, we’ve sat down with over fifty people close to OG to ask them which values best represent the organization. Together we built what is now called the Backpacktivist Manifesto: a working document that we will use to inform everything we do, both abroad and right here in our home communities.

Here are the values that every backpacktivist should strive for:

» Prepared to change: the most important quality in a backpacktivist is the ability to reflect and adapt.

» Full life livin’: squeeze the sweet nectar out of every opportunity the world throws at us!

» Conscientious: adhering to local traditions and customs allows us to understand the value of cultures different from our own.

» Respect: make an effort to understand all people... even the ones we don’t get along with.

» Humility: a backpacktivist may look silly searching for words in a new language, but the very attempt connects us to locals on a whole different level.

» Solidarity: a backpacktivist stands in solidarity with all peoples, regardless of race, gender, or class.

» Group-focused: leverage the power of a group to develop a deeper understanding of the world around us and ourselves.

» Thirst for learning: the road is the best classroom and a backpacktivist is searching for truth.

» Leadership: we are training the next generation of positive and diverse leaders.
THE SUMMER OF YOUR LIFE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.
HERE’S EVERYTHING THAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

A LETTER FROM OUR REGIONAL DIRECTOR

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU’RE OFFICIALLY PART OF THE OG FAMILY!

On behalf of Operation Groundswell, we are proud to welcome you to Guatemala: Seed to Shelf! For eight years we have facilitated backpacking and service-learning programs to Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. We have built a community of “backpacktivists” that are socially, environmentally, and politically aware of their impact in the communities they travel to and live in.

Over the years, we have begun to take an interest in learning more about where stuff comes from and how to bring the principles of ethical travel we learn abroad back home.

And so in the original Banana Republic and in the cradle of the Mayan civilization where coffee and malnutrition grow side-by-side, we created “Seed to Shelf”.

For 9 incredible days we will bus, truck, trek, and tuctuc our way up and down the Guatemalan Highlands. From the cobbled streets and gastronomical delights of Antigua to the bustling vegetable markets of Xela, from the small-holder farms of Quetzaltenango to the textile cooperatives of Sololá, we will explore Guatemala’s social landscape from the ground up. We will taste cacao straight from the pod and sample coffee in the field it was grown while collaborating on community development initiatives.

We will meet with Fair-Fruit Guatemala, a Fair Trade organization working to build capacity with local campesinos. Our group will have a chance to break bread with Cafe Red, a social enterprise promoting local food economies, as well as weave with the women of AMA. We will introduce you to coffee cooperative De la Gente, exemplary of the small producers that underwrite the bulk of Guatemala’s coffee trade. We are also excited to introduce you to CCDA and the community of Santa Anita who have gone from revolutionary guerillas to coffee growing reformers.

The combination of hands-on projects, cultural immersion, and adventure will provide an incomparable space for us to challenge ourselves and each other. We will reflect on the links between our commodities and their livelihoods, between trade and solidarity, and how we can all learn to grow social justice.

Be sure to pack your journal - and appetite. You’ll need both on this unique journey!

¡Saludos y buen provecho!

Ben Sampson
Guatemala Regional Director
DAY 1 - ORIENTATION
LOCATION Guatemala City, Antigua
ACCOMMODATIONS Hostal Antigueño

We begin our journey in Antigua where the group will acclimatize to the sights, smells, sounds, and smiles of the region. We’ll explore the cobblestone streets of Central America’s historical colonial capital as we orient ourselves to the country’s cultural and geographic landscape. Get ready to experience modern Mayan culture and relish in its delectable delights!

DAY 2 - COFFEE & CULTURE
LOCATION Guatemala City, Antigua, San Miguel Escobar
ACCOMMODATIONS Hostal Antigueño

We dive right into our exploration of the global food system as we head out to nearby San Miguel Escobar to explore the coffee chain from seed to shelf with De La Gente, a sustainable agricultural cooperative. We will join founding members Filiberto and Timoteo on the slopes of Volcán Agua where we will learn to pick, process, and roast our coffee. We will also join another farmer’s family for a culinary lesson in typical and traditional Guatemalan cuisine.

DAY 3 - MARKET JUSTICE
LOCATION Xela, Quetzaltenango
ACCOMMODATIONS Hostal N’oj

In the ladino and indigenous metropolis of Xela, we will delve deeper into the world of traditional and modern Mesoamerican products. We’ll join revolutionary turned reformer, Willie, at Cafe Red for a delicious meal and an insightful chat about the challenges facing campesinos and their struggle to integrate into the new socio-economic order. After scavenging through Xela’s incredible markets we will join Escuela La Paz for a traditional highland dinner and dance.

DAY 4 - ABOVE THE CLOUDS ON SANTA MARIA/SANTIAGUITO
LOCATION Xela, Quetzaltenango
ACCOMMODATIONS Hostal N’oj

The following day, our group will really turn up the level of adventure! We’ll get up bright and early as we take on an epic hike of Volcán Santa Maria or its more explosive younger sibling, Santiaguito. It’ll be an unforgettable journey as we push ourselves physically to be rewarded with an incomparable view above the clouds.

DAY 5 - COFFEE REVOLUTIONS
LOCATION Santa Anita, Colomba Costa Cuca
ACCOMMODATIONS Homestay

After a brief journey north-west via chicken bus, our group will settle into the community of Santa Anita where we will work with a coffee and banana cooperative founded by former civil war combatants. We will get to know their stories and share our own, building solidarity in a way many travellers never have the chance to experience. To top it all off, our team will stay in the homes of local families, sharing meals and deepening connections.
DAY 6 - THE ART OF BEEKEEPING
LOCATION Santa Anita, Colomba Costa Cuca
ACCOMMODATIONS Homestay

The following day, we will get our hands dirty in compost as we learn the art of beekeeping and collaborate on the construction of the community’s new beneficio or mill where their coffee will be washed, depulped, fermented, dried, and sorted. Through these community development initiatives, we will share in the lives of farmers, cooperatives, and reformers to get at the root of our global food system.

DAY 7 - GROWING CHANGE
LOCATION Lago Atitlan
ACCOMMODATIONS The Hub

We will conclude our exploration at Operation Groundswell’s place-based operations or Hub, located on the shores of beautiful Lago Atitlan. The Hub is a physical embodiment of OG’s culture, philosophy, and mission. It is a place where solidarity is cultivated in and between people and local partners through conversations and collaborative projects. It is also a site where OG can test and develop new ways to create positive impact alongside our participants and our local partners. We will use our time here to participate in a collective permaculture project and taste the fruits of our labour.

DAY 8 - DISORIENTATION
LOCATION Lago Atitlan
ACCOMMODATIONS The Hub

After a whirlwind week, we’ll spend Day 8 resting our tired legs, refreshing in magical waters, and reflecting on our awesome adventure. We’ll have the chance to kayak on a volcanic lake or simply stroll along its waters. We will discuss lessons learned, assess our impact, and prepare for the journey home.

DAY 9 - DEPARTURES
LOCATION Guatemala City

Finally on day 9, with hearts full of memories, we will return to Guatemala City where our group will say adios and adelante!
GUATEMALA IS NOT THE WHAT YOU MIGHT EXPECT. HERE ARE THE DETAILS.

GUATEMALA COUNTRY PROFILE

Capital: Guatemala City
Population: 14.5 million
Major languages: Spanish, Quiche, Q’eqchi
Major religion: Catholic, Evangelical, Maya
Life expectancy: 68 years (men), 75 (women)
Monetary unit: The Quetzal
Time Zone: UTC -6:00

Dotted with lakes, volcanoes, and jungles, Guatemala is most certainly one of the most biologically diverse and beautiful countries in the Western Hemisphere. The size of Ohio and home to over 14 million people, this Central American country is bordered by Mexico to the north, Belize to the northeast, and El Salvador and Honduras to the southwest.

Guatemala is perhaps most renowned for being the birthplace of the great Maya civilization which flourished between 800BC-900AD. Despite their mysterious disappearance from Guatemala at the turn of the 1st millennia, the legacy of the Maya remains very visible today. The Maya still make up over half of Guatemala’s population and Mayan languages are still commonly spoken alongside Spanish. Most other Guatemalans are of a mixed Amerindian-Hispanic origin popularly called Ladino, with only 1% still identifying as European.

Unfortunately, Guatemala’s natural beauty and strength of identity have not been accompanied by political cohesion or economic prosperity. In 1996, the country emerged from a devastating 36-year-long civil war, which pitted leftist Mayan and Ladino insurgents against a repressive military. Backed by the US, the military waged a vicious campaign to eliminate the guerrillas, as well as the indigenous and peasant communities perceived to support them. The result has been described by Human Rights Watch as nothing less than genocide.

More than 200,000 people - most of them indigenous civilians - were killed or disappeared while another 1,000,000 were displaced. Despite an official finding that state security forces carried 93% of all the war’s atrocities, moves to bring those responsible to account and reconcile a legacy of racial discrimination and socio-economic marginalization has been slow. As a consequence, Guatemala’s young democratic tradition remains tenuous.

Guatemala is Central America’s largest economy boasting rich mineral deposits, a productive agricultural sector, growing service sector, and tremendous amounts of human capital. Its resource wealth however, has not been translated into economic growth or development. Poverty is acute and particularly widespread in the countryside and among indigenous communities. Rates of illiteracy, infant mortality, and malnutrition are among the region’s highest while life expectancy is among the lowest.

All-in-all Guatemala is a country of striking contrasts, a rich cultural history, incredible natural beauty, and immeasurable economic potential compared against a bloody past, troubled present, and uncertain future. But generosity, optimism, and determination best describe the remarkable people that call this funny-shaped country home.
WE RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OUR LOCAL PARTNERS.

WHO WE’RE WORKING WITH

**ESCUELA LA PAZ**
www.xelapages.com/lapaz

Escuela La Paz is a non-profit education centre located in Quetzaltenango (also known as Xela). Principally run by university educated indigenous women, the school facilitates one-on-one language study in a context that gives students an awareness of the social, political, and economic realities of Guatemala. In 2013, the Guatemalan Ministry of Education accredited Escuela La Paz to provide Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced Spanish language certification to eligible students.

**CAFÉ RED/DESGUA**

Based in Xela, Café Red (Network) is a Café and Restaurant owned and operated by a collective of indigenous reformers. It dedicates itself to cultivating a domestic coffee culture and constructing markets for locally produced commodities including coffee, textiles and chocolate. DESGUA is a grassroots organization and network of community groups in Guatemala and the United States working to create economic and educational development with and for returned immigrants and Mayan communities in Guatemala.

**SANTA ANITA/APCASA**

The Asociación de Productores de Café Santa Anita (APCASA) is a coffee and banana growing cooperative based in the community of Santa Anita La Union situated on the pacific slope of Quetzaltenango. All of its members served in Guatemala’s civil war as revolutionary guerillas and members of the URNG. In 1998, they purchased a previously abandoned farm with some support from the EU and Spanish Red Cross and have since developed it into a productive coffee cooperative and healthy community of 34 families with a school, daycare, recreational facilities, hostel, and restaurant.

**FAIR FRUIT/COABA FARMS**

With a processing facility and experimental farm outside of Antigua, Fair-Fruit is a European company that provides smallholder vegetable farmers with technical assistance, fixed prices, and production programs which allow them to make educated decisions about investing their time and resources throughout the production process. Coaba Farms is a locally owned and operated organic farm specializing in fruits and veggies native to the region. They also run tours, offer meals, and provide educational workshops in horticulture and organic practices.

**CAMPASINO COMMITTEE OF THE HIGHLANDS (CCDA)**

The Campesino Committee of the Highlands (CCDA) was established in 1982 to defend the rights of workers on large coffee, sugar, and cotton plantations, to recover lands taken from the Mayan communities over the past centuries, and to promote and recover Mayan culture and spirituality. Today the CCDA operates as an umbrella organization for more than 100 communities in 11 Guatemalan departments. Current projects are primarily focused on land redistribution and food sovereignty, as well as providing support for the production, transformation, and trade of agricultural products and handcrafts.
GETTING IN & OUT OF GUATEMALA

PASSPORTS
You will need a valid passport with an expiry date of no less than 6 months after your estimated time of return. If you have not done so already, you should immediately begin the process of acquiring/renewing your passport.

For Canadian citizens applying for a passport, visit: www.ppt.gc.ca
For U.S. citizens applying for a passport, visit: www.state.gov

VISAS
You are responsible for having all the proper visa requirements and though your program fee does not cover visa costs, your program leaders are there to answer any questions if a pre-trip application is necessary. For citizens of Canada and the US, a valid passport usually grants entry to Guatemala for a stay of up to 90 days. We advise that you confirm your visa requirements directly with your embassy as soon as possible to give yourself sufficient time to apply for a visa, if necessary.

WHERE WILL WE BE SLEEPING?
This is not a vagabond’s adventure nor is it a five-star jetsetter’s cruise. We will be sleeping and eating as a team in hostels, homestays, and guesthouses that reflect a backpacker’s ethos. Grassroots travel and homestays will allow us to immerse in the local culture but living as Guatemalans do sometimes means living without some of the comforts to which we’re accustomed. Creepy crawlies are common while comfy beds can’t always be guaranteed - so come prepared! Be ready to share the wonderful simplicity of life in rural Guatemala.

FLIGHT INFORMATION
With years of experimenting on how to arrange flights, Operation Groundswell has found that participants often find cheaper flights by booking on their own. What we want to stress is that you must arrive into La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City on September 5, 2015 before 4 p.m. The official end date of the program—a.k.a. the date we’ll drop you off at the airport to go home - is September 13, 2015 after 12 p.m.

We suggest checking Kayak, Orbitz, Cheapoair, Google Flights and other flight sites to get the cheapest rate. If you are an American student, we have a partnership with StudentUniverse to offer you the some of the most affordable airfare options. Click here to look for flights.

If you are Canadian and you would rather the personal touch of a travel agent, you can get in touch with Alan Borenstein at Flight Centre. He is a past program leader and currently books all our program leader’s flights. You can reach him toll-free at 1-877-815-4906 or send him an email at alan.borenstein@flightcentre.ca.

NOTE: If you arrive before the program begins, you will not be under the auspices of Operation Groundswell. We cannot guarantee that anyone will meet you at the airport or arrange your accommodations. You will be entirely responsible for yourself until the first day of the program. Check all flights with your program leaders before you book them!

**IMPORTANT**
You will receive an email (if you haven’t already) with a link to fill out your flight information. It is imperative that you fill this out so that we can arrange pickups on the first day of the program.
HEALTH & SAFETY ARE OUR TOP PRIORITY.

TRAVEL HEALTH & MEDICINE

STAYING HEALTHY ON THE GROUND

Staying healthy on your program is one of the most important aspects of enjoying an Operation Groundswell experience. With the proper preparation beforehand and careful attention on the program, you can minimize most health risks while still having a great time. Operation Groundswell expects you to meet with a travel doctor or your GP (if he or she is comfortable advising), before leaving your country of origin. You must be up-to-date with all necessary vaccinations and equipped with any necessary medications for travel in Guatemala. We advise you to bring a copy of your itinerary to your appointment or send it to your doctor beforehand. While we provide a lot of recommended information here, the travel doctor will know what you absolutely need at the time of departure according to which region(s) you’re traveling to.

Operation Groundswell requires your doctor’s signature on a personal medical history form stating that you are both physically and mentally cleared for participation in the program. Operation Groundswell does not discriminate against physical or mental conditions or disability. We simply want to make sure that you are fully aware of the risks and challenges of the program, that we are aware of any previous medical conditions, and that we have the capacity to support you while you’re abroad! This form will be sent to you two weeks after your deposit has been paid.

REGIONALLY RELEVANT MEDICINE

Malaria
Recommended for travelers visiting areas with a high incidence of Malaria.

Hepatitis A & B
Recommended for all travelers.

Typhoid
Recommended for all travelers.

Yellow fever
Required for travelers arriving from a yellow-fever-infected area in Africa or the Americas.

Rabies
Recommended only for travelers who will be at high risk for animal bites or who will be coming into contact with bats.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Operation Groundswell requires you to purchase travel health insurance for the duration of your time abroad. It’s important to make sure you find the insurance plan that suits your needs.

At the minimum, participants generally get basic medical insurance to cover them for any medical emergencies that occur while they’re abroad. We recommend shopping around on sites like squaremouth.com, which will list a variety of options and compare their coverage. The cost will depend on the extras you get on top of medical (covering lost or stolen baggage, electronics, etc.)

If Operation Groundswell must cancel a program due to low numbers, OG will be happy to relocate you to another program. If you would rather cancel than relocate, OG will reimburse your full program fee but is not responsible for refunding any flight cost or other costs associated with the program. You decide if you’d like to insure your flight, buy a flexible ticket, or buy separate flight insurance through your airline.

KEEPING US IN THE LOOP

Two weeks after paying your deposit, you will receive an email with:

» A copy of the personal medical history form that your doctor must sign
» A personal link where you can upload the signed copy

**We require this form at the latest a month before your program starts.

A month before your program starts, you will receive an email with a link for you to provide your:

» Emergency contact
» Travel insurance
» Flight information

The links you will be sent are live forms, so you can fill out a portion of the information when you have it and continue filling it out once you’ve booked your flights, etc. closer to the program date.

**IMPORTANT**
The above information is required for participation in every OG program.
SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

STAYING SAFE ON THE GROUND

As a well-established and experienced volunteer-abroad organization, Operation Groundswell takes active precautions to keep you safe and secure while overseas on your program. We take travel safety very seriously. Each section of your program undergoes a standardized risk assessment. Your program leaders do a dry run of your program before you arrive to confirm the nearest medical facilities and potential risks. At least one program leader on each program has taken a Wilderness First Aid course and is fully certified by Wilderness Medical Associates. Our program leaders are proficient in local languages (where it is necessary) and have met and discussed safety concerns with our local partners.

Each program checks in daily with our Toronto headquarters to relay important information and ensure the health and safety of participants. Our Programs Director reads regional travel warnings daily and is available 24/7 to deal with emergencies on the ground.

With that in mind, it is important to remember that every OG program prides itself on taking you directly into the experience of living in that region. Pick pocketing, purse snatching, and various types of scams are the most common forms of crime confronting visitors. Those who limit their display of jewelry and handle their cash discreetly reduce their vulnerability to crime. Participants are advised to carry limited amounts of cash for this reason.

There is no nationwide advisory in effect for Guatemala. However, travellers are advised to exercise a high degree of caution due to the prevalence of violent crime, particularly in the major cities. Additionally, roadblocks, strikes, and demonstrations occur periodically throughout the country. Travellers are also advised to be very cautious when in transit. Secondary streets and rural roads are poorly lit, local motorists rarely obey traffic laws, and steep, winding mountain roads and lack of road signs all present additional dangers.

OG and its local partners are familiar with these risks and will take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety and security of its participants. This includes maintaining an effective flow of information and using the knowledge of our wonderful partners, local contacts, and officials.

Equally, OG program leaders will project an inclusive, respectful, and non-partisan image. They will be running through the entire program prior to your arrival to ensure that everything is safe and secure. Nevertheless, program logistics will remain under review and the itinerary flexible to unforeseen developments. Learn more about our safety protocols.

**IMPORTANT**

There are also a variety of safety precautions that we require you to undertake prior to and immediately upon arrival in Guatemala.

First, team members should read government travel advisories for Guatemala.

NOTE: Keep in mind that government advisories provide a countrywide assessment of risks and we will provide more region-specific information in the pre-program meetings that each team will have with their program leaders in April.

Second, all Canadian participants are required to register with Consular Services Canada as a “Canadian Traveling Abroad.” This will allow the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to contact us in case of an emergency.

Please make the required registration for your trip at http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration.

Those traveling with a U.S. passport should register at https://step.state.gov/step/.

For all other nationalities, please find your country’s consular services to see if there is an option to register as a traveler abroad.

STAYING IN TOUCH

Internet will be available periodically for you to email home. Telephone access will be limited. Buying a local cell phone can be a more cost effective way of keeping in touch. Your team will be blogging throughout the program so pass on the link to family and friends: www.operationgroundswell.com/journal/. Additionally, both your program leaders have locally serviced cell phones for emergency use. They will be in regular contact throughout the summer with OG’s Programs Director. In case of emergency, please ask your family or next of kin to call OG’s main line at 1-888-422-0164. From there, they will be connected directly to one of our on-call Summer Coordinators.
Remember: The rule of thumb is always to pack as lightly as possible!

WHAT TO PACK

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

» Passport (valid beyond 6 months from the start date of the program)
» Extra passport photos (if you have them)
» Copies of passport/tickets/credit cards (you want extras in case you lose a document)
» Customer service numbers for credit cards/insurance
» Proof of vaccinations

BACKPACK & DAYPACK

Because we’re not wheelie-baggers, we’re backpackers! We recommend going to an outdoor adventure store and getting a pack fitted to you. Most people should only need a 45-65L pack. Try a bunch on and compare prices to find one that is right. You could also borrow from a friend!

It is also important to bring a daypack for short trips and daily use. Also, you’ll probably want to have room in your bag so you can pick things up along the way like weavings, coffee, or books.
PACKING LIST CONTINUED

OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS

» Sleeping bag (try to find one that is warm with a 0-3 degree rating, but as small as possible. Compressor straps come in handy too.)
» 1 bath towel (quick-dry adventure towels are the lightest)
» Flashlight (headlamps are popular and recommended)
» Min. 1L reusable water bottle
» A pocket knife (but don’t pack this in your carry-on luggage)
» Medication/EpiPen if you need it

GENERAL CLOTHING

» One-week supply of underwear
» One-week supply of socks
» 1-2 pairs of shorts (ladies, please try to keep them knee length, short shorts don’t go over too well in some areas and we want to be culturally sensitive)
» 1-2 t-shirts/tank-tops (revealing clothing isn’t your best bet)
» 1 pair of pants for treks and hikes (ideally lightweight & quick-dry - you may get wet!)
» 1 pair of jeans or khakis and a nice shirt/polo for when we meet community leaders/important folk
» 1-2 longer sleeve shirts as it can get cold at night and it’s good to layer
» 1 sweater - a good quality fleece is great because it is warm but LIGHT.
» One waterproof jacket (a shell that you can layer a sweater underneath is probably the best!)
» A hat to protect you from the sun
» A bathing suit (Note: modesty is your friend)
» Other warm clothes such as a hat or mittens for early morning hikes or camping in the highlands

Clothes are overrated. Seriously. You’ll end up wearing the same thing almost every day, so give your back a break and make your load lighter! Plus, good quality, used clothes are available in many Guatemalan markets or stores (called Ropa Americana) and it’s always nice to support local markets.

SHOES

If you buy new shoes, break them in before the program

» 1 pair of sturdy hiking boots/trail shoes (for work and trekking around)
» 1 pair of water proof shoes/sandals
» 1 pair of comfortable casual/dress shoes

PERSONAL HYGIENE & TOILETRIES

» Regular hygiene items like soap, shampoo, deodorant, shaving cream, etc. (Note: these are all readily available in smaller quantities and at a cheaper price if you would rather buy them down there. Another good option is bringing small quantities to begin with and refilling once in-country)
» Vitamins, painkillers, cold medicines, etc.
» Toothbrush and toothpaste
» 1 extra pair of prescription glasses or contacts/contact solution (if required)
» Tampons and pads (it is always a good idea to bring more than enough tampons. Although you can buy this in-country, most smaller communities will only sell pads.)
» Bug spray and after bite
» Sunscreen and lip balm
» Imodium/Pepto Bismol (you will want this!)
» One round of prescription medicine (i.e. diarrhoea meds – ask your doctor)
» If you have asthma and you need a puffer, bring it even if you rarely use it. Same goes for allergies and EpiPens
» Any prescriptions that you need (refrigeration may not always be possible, so check in with your program leaders)

NOTE: All program leaders are equipped with First Aid Kits, so though it is useful to have basics like Advil or Tylenol, you don’t need to pack a pharmacy. There will be a medical form sent out closer to the program start time so you can outline and specific mental or physical health problems.

OTHER NICE-TO-HAVE ITEMS

» Journal & Pen
» iPod/MP3 player if you have one
» Camera
» Ear plugs
» Eye mask
» Money belt/discreet wallet
» No need for a computer, iPhone, iPad, or anything similar as we will have access to a computer when we have access to the internet!
MONEY MATTERS

IT’S EASY TO GET AROUND RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVELY ON AN OG PROGRAM. WHAT YOU SPEND IS REALLY UP TO YOU.

The program fee covers the costs of accommodations, three meals a day, transport, and excursions. It does NOT cover any personal expenses such as souvenirs, laundry, or snacks. For these cases, you will want to bring some spending money.

We recommend that you bring some cash with you, $50-$100 USD (You do not want to carry too much cash).

MONEY TIPS

» Leave any traveler’s cheques and Canadian money at home. They are problematic to cash or exchange.
» Visa is the most widely accepted credit card. Do your best to have a chip card that is PIN ENABLED to have it work in ATMs. Make sure that the PLUS sign is on the back of your card so that it works in international ATM locations.
» Debit is also an effective option. ATM/ABMs are widespread and can dispense up to $200 USD equivalent. There is a transaction charge of approx. $2.50-$5.00 USD, but they are the most convenient and safest option. It is advisable to communicate with your bank before departure to determine their level of accessibility.
» Call your bank and inform them of your travel plans so they don’t place a hold on your account when they see money being withdrawn in a foreign country (you do NOT want this to happen!)
» There will be a safety talk before the program, but money in large amounts, Interac/credit cards, etc. will NOT be carried in any one location and we recommend using money belts/discreet wallets.
» DO NOT CHANGE MONEY IN THE GUATEMALA CITY AIRPORT (the rate is the absolute worst!)

CHANCES ARE SOMETHING IN ONE GUATEMALA’S BUSY MARKETS WILL CATCH YOUR EYE.
CULTURAL DO’S AND DO NOT’S

Be a cultural chameleon and do what you can to show as much courtesy and interest in the local culture as possible. Do as the locals do and try to follow these basic rules while in Guatemala! Being aware and sensitive to your surroundings is the first step towards being a traveler and not a tourist!

DO...

» Be personable. Preface conversations - even simple requests - with buenos días (good morning) or buenas tardes (good afternoon/evening). It is also courteous to say hello to the person sitting next to you on the bus and to make a general greeting when entering a public place like a restaurant.

» Shake hands and say mucho gusto (nice to meet you) the first time you meet someone.

» Be respectful. Use the formal “usted” (you) to address locals until they use the informal (“tu” or “vos”) to address you.

» Learn the language.

» Pay attention to your appearance. Looking scruffy and unwashed is considered an affront.

» Be modest. Short shorts and tank tops are sometimes frowned upon. To be on the safe side, dress conservatively, especially in rural indigenous communities.

» Be sensitive. Avoid being openly critical of the region’s problems. Guatemalans recognize their country’s challenges but are sometimes sensitive to criticism from outsiders.

» Ask first. Always ask before photographing people, especially children. Some communities are extremely sensitive about child photography for reasons we will discuss.

» Practice patience. Time is a flexible concept and there can be a severe lack of urgency in Central American culture. RELAX, sit back, and enjoy life off the clock.

» Be grateful. Accept local food and drink when offered. Guatemalans are extremely generous and hospitable. They will offer to share whatever they have. Try to receive it graciously but if necessary, decline politely.

DO NOT...

» Try not to talk too loudly; the Maya in particular find westerners overbearingly loud. If you visit one of the smaller highland markets, one of the most interesting aspects is how quiet it is, with business being conducted in sotto voce.

» Do not put toilet paper in the toilet. It goes in the garbage can.

» Do not refer to indigenous peoples as indios. Indigena is the preferred term.

» Do not expect everything to run as planned and/or on schedule. Many things will not work out as intended but almost always works out in the end.

» Do not take pictures of religious ceremonies or inside religious centers without permission.

» Do not be offended if people comment frankly about your appearance or even provide you with a nickname associated with it (e.g. Gordita/fatty). Weight = health for many in Guatemala and the name is intended affectionately.

» Do not be offended by the word “gringo”. Although it can sometimes be used derogatorily, it is often used in a playful, affectionate tone.

» Do not give/lend money or gifts if/when requested, especially by children. We are not trying to create dependent relationships or unrealistic expectations. Decline politely and/or blame OG (e.g. “our organization does not permit us to”). We will talk more about this.

» Do not be offended if you see people spitting and/or urinating in public as they are both prevalent and accepted practices. Similarly, don’t be surprised/offended to see men sleeping in public places. We will discuss this more as well.
SPANISH FOR DUMMIES

Hello:
Hola (o-la)

Good Morning:
Buenos Dias (bwe-nos dee-as) or simply: Buenos (bwe-nos)

What’s up?:
Qué Tal (keh tull) or Qué Pasó (keh pass-o)

Please:
Por favor or “porfa” for short

Thank You:
Gracias

Sorry (forgive me): 
Disculpe (dees-kool-pe), Lo siento (low see-en-toe)

Very good:
Muy bien (mooh-y bee-en)

Yes:
Sí (see)

No:
No

Stop:
No hagas eso (no ah-gahs eh-sow) literally “don’t do that”

How much (does this cost?):
Cuanto cuesta? (kwan-to kwes-ta)

Nice to meet you:
Mucho gusto (moo-cho goose-tow)

I am Canadian/American:
Soy canadiense/american(a) (soy kah-nah-dee-en- say/ ah-meh-ree-can-oh/a)

I don’t understand:
No entiendo (no en-tee-en-doh)

Can I have...to eat?:
Puedo tener...(pweh-doh ten-ehr)

Can I have...to drink?:
Puedo tomar...(pweh-doh toe-mar)

Chicken:
Pollo (poe-yo)

Rice:
Arroz (ah-ross)

Water:
Agua (ah-gwa)

Beer:
Cervesa (ser-ve-sa)

No, I cannot marry you:
No puedo casarle (no pweh-doh kas-ar-leh)
KNOWING STUFF MAKES YOU SMARTER

RESOURCES BEFORE YOU ARRIVE
This section is meant to provide further information on the region that cannot be covered in this program package. These are extra resources that you may draw upon to learn more about the places that you will be travelling, current/relevant issues in these places, as well as media such as films and music which may help paint a cultural picture.

**If the links don’t work, just copy and paste them into your browser!**

BOOKS

Pillage of a Continent by Eduardo Galeano

Time Among the Maya: Travels in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico by Ronald Wright

Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation by Greg Grandin

I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala by Rigoberta Menchu

Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala by Stephen Schlesinger

Men of Maize by Miguel Asturias

Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival by Daniel Jaffee

Confronting the Coffee Crisis: Fair Trade, Sustainable Livelihoods and Ecosystems in Mexico and Central America Edited by Bacon, Mendez, Gliessman, Goodman and Fox

FILMS

La Camioneta (2012)

Bananas! (2009)

Black Gold (2006)

YOUTUBE

Guatemala, mi amor.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBmogbgvX00

All That Glitters is Not Gold

Part 1/6: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp4jBtL7kxs

Part 2/6: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtvjZrTEqBk&feature=related

Part 3/6: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcW3xy-pko0&feature=related


Part 5/6: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gs0wlPNo1Ng&feature=related

Part 6/6: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4asSg_suB4&feature=related

MUSIC

Paco Perez Luna de Xelajú

Alux Nahual Es como un duende

Ricardo Arjona Jesus Verbo No Sustainivo

TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO OPEN YOUR MIND AND SOAK UP EVERYTHING YOU CAN.
FINAL CHECKLIST
FOR THE
ADVENTURE OF A
LIFETIME.

FINAL CHECKLIST

Don’t panic! We’ve gone through each point in this package!

☐ Make sure you have a valid passport! You must have a passport valid 6 months after your expected date of departure.

☐ Make an appointment with your travel doctor ASAP and make sure you’re up to date with your vaccinations (sometimes it can take up to three weeks to get these). Fill out your medical history form and make sure your doctor signs it.

☐ Book your flight! You are responsible for booking your own flight but once you’ve found it, check the exact details with your program leader before booking.

☐ Get travel insurance.

☐ Fill out the emergency contact, travel insurance and flight form, and upload your medical history form (link will be sent via email. Contact us if you do not receive it by the month leading up to your program).

☐ Pay your 2nd and 3rd installment.

☐ Meet your team in your final pre-program meeting in April!

☐ Sign online waiver (will be sent to you via e-mail).

☐ GET EXCITED!!!
GET READY TO BACKPACK WITH A PURPOSE THIS FALL.

ALL OF THE PHOTOS IN THIS BOOK ARE MEMORIES CAPTURED BY OG ALUMNI