



Cultural International Exchange Program Guatemala City, Central America

What is Intercultural experiences?

Our program is a cultural exchange facilitator for young people between the ages of 11 and 17 that provides the necessary tools to learn and achieve cultural and human development. During this 8-week period of time, they will have the opportunity to attend Private Schools and share time with hosting families.

Objectives of the Cultural Exchange Program:

- Improve the participant's fluency in English.
- Share the Culture with their hosting families.
- Establish the basis of their future educational opportunities.
- Strengthen their self-assurance and assume new challenges.
- Have the participants enjoy the experience, making new friends.
- Share a bilateral cultural enrichment with his classmates and host families through a series of activities such as: a Power point presentation with information about their country; a documentary video in which they will show a little about Guatemalan history; also written booklets with information about traditions (the Mayan Civilization, Guatemalan costumes, Guatemalan food, etc.) and a taste of Guatemalan food.

Profile of our Participants:

- Boys and girls between the ages 11 and 17.
- Students who attend private bilingual / trilingual schools in Guatemala City.
- Our participants must have a strong desire to participate in the program, recognizing the experience as enriching for their emotional and academic growth.
- They speak English well enough to communicate effectively. **(Some are more fluent than others).**
- All of them go through a very strict selection and screening process to make sure they will be able to adapt to the activities of the hosting family. An interview is made in English where the participant is asked about the main purpose and expectations of this experience.
- He/she is also required to have an excellent recommendation letter from his/her principal, coordinator, and English Teacher. The letters provide us with a perspective of their school behavior.
- Participants must also complete a psychological evaluation, which determines maturity, responsibility, and whether or not the participants are ready to take this experience.
- In order to complete the process they will also be required to:

1. Complete the application form,
2. Participate in the exchange preparation program,
3. Take a personal growth course,
4. Have a valid American visa,
5. Provide a written parent legal Authorization,
6. Complete a Medical Certificate,
7. Provide last year's report card (average 80 pts.)

About the Preparation Program

Participants are required to take a workshop prior to leaving Guatemala to learn as much information as they can about:

- Guidelines for presenting a Cultural Exchange Project Presentation of Guatemala to their US School.
- Main Objectives, Rules and Policies of the Exchange Program
- General information about the State (weather, demographic, geographic, traditions, etc.)
- School's general profile (culture, opportunities, dress code, electives, etc.)
- How to use insurance.
- What if? Scenarios.
- How much money they should bring for additional activities, souvenirs, etc.
- Clothes to take with them.

Profile of Guatemalan families and Guatemalan schools:

- Families who live in an environment of good values and good behavior.
- Families from middle to high socioeconomic status, 90% live in the city.
- Usually both parents are college graduates, who view this as an important educational experience for their children's future.
- They have already visited the US as a tourist experience.
- About 50% of the parents speak fluent English and may have gone through a cultural exchange experience themselves when they were younger.
- The participants usually attend to Guatemala's best private bilingual or trilingual schools. Note: The school cycle in Guatemala is from Mid-January to Mid-October, with vacation from mid-October to early January. During
- Vacation they may choose to attend school in the USA, in order to strengthen their English and to learn vital life skills.

Duration of the Exchange Program:

Eight weeks – from October 17th to December 12th 2020

We consider it very important to give information in advance about the exchange students to host families, to appropriately prepare them for a mutually successful experience.



Quick facts

- We have been working for 14 years in several states of America, with over 40 private schools.
- Guatemalan bilingual youngsters between 11-17 years old, attend private schools during an 8 week period of time. (Oct-Dec) Only two or three students to each school.
- The US embassy in Guatemala approves our Program, and allows them to travel with Visitor Visa, but if the school requires student visa, we could process it as well.
- They live with host families, adapting to their daily schedule and house rules.
- In the school they are not required to be graded, but they are academically committed, since they have to "earn" an approval letter from the schools they attend, for their schools in Guatemala and in order to complete the Program.
- They are prepared to present a cultural project in their schools (about Mayan Civilization, Guatemalan Traditions and their lives in Guatemala) as well as a handicraft class for the youngest ones in school to support Spanish classes.
- They come to the US with Travel, Health and dental Insurance, Medical Records, Legal documents, pocket money.
- Parents in Guatemala pay a fee, which is set by the school and what it includes. Host families shouldn't pay for any other expenses.
- The program coordinators travel with the group and they drop our students with the families or school representatives.
- The Program also coordinates Trips to Guatemala for schools in America, during the spring, or summer break for social service, tourism and/or English immersion from 1-3 weeks (this program is optional).

Host family



Important points to remember for the host family

1. The students in Guatemala attend different schools. Some of them are more fluent in the language than others. They take specific subjects in English, such as Science, Social Studies, Grammar, Spelling, and Reading. Regardless of their English level, all of them go through a transition period where their hearing skill is improved and they stop translating into their native language. This adaptation process takes place during the first week, which is why we request, you talk a little slower, change any words that they don't understand or simply give them time to adjust to their immersion in a language which they are not used to.
2. It is important to mention that dinnertime in Guatemala is scheduled at about 8:00 pm at night, not as early as in the United States. We would like to ask you to understand that at first they will eat little and later probably they will want to have dessert or something to drink, while their eating schedule adapts to the new schedule. In Guatemala they have a slightly larger breakfast than in the US. They usually have milk or juice, eggs, yogurt, cereal, or toast. This is in no sense an indication for you to make breakfast for them, but just a request so they can be allowed to prepare their meals themselves. This would be the first days only, afterwards they will adapt to the household's routine.
3. Regarding permissions or going out. It is permitted if it does not interfere with the schedules at home, to go out in groups with friends, but dating is not allowed.
4. Participants are allowed to bring their mobile to be in contact with their family in Guatemala. This allows them to briefly communicate home, to let their parents know that they can be reached. Families in Guatemala know they should call only once a week. This has to be on a fixed day. This day is agreed on at the start of the program and this weekly call should be at a time that is convenient for the host family. (Parents will sign an agreement in case the student does not follow the rules, we will share this agreement with the host family to keep them on the loop).
5. **It is important for the participants to know the house rules. If you have rules set at home, we request that you advise the children about them to avoid misunderstandings.** For example, bedtime, time to chat, rules of where to eat, chores, etc. The participants know they have to follow all the house rules, so it would be appreciated if they were shared at the beginning of their stay.
6. The children will ask to be taken to do some shopping, previously authorized by their parents in Guatemala. This does not imply a formal weekly or frequent visit to the mall.
7. The participant is prepared to cook something, for them host family to try a little of Guatemalan food. During that evening, they will learn and share a little about Guatemalan traditions and they will all play a game were they can only communicate in Spanish, please let them know when is the best time to have this activity taken place.

Host family



8. In relation to school teachers and principals at school, they know what to expect from students. Although students are actually on school vacation, the program requires commitment from parents and participants to join as regular students. This will give them the chance to get to know the American educational system and improve their English. The participants will have to do school work and homework and fulfill educational requirements. This is beneficial for them and helps to have a good relationship between their host siblings and themselves and to balance their time at home.
9. When defining extracurricular activities at school, we request parents to check schedules and verify that they can attend these activities without prejudice to the schedule of the family.
10. During the exchange program the coordinator will contact parents, teachers, principals, and also the participants themselves to evaluate, monitor, and support the correct development of the program. We will be contacting you to share information with us, and in turn, you can count on our help at any time.
11. The participants have health, dental and travel insurance. This insurance provides assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and allows for emergency services. Within the same file you have a legal document that allows you (with legal authority of parents in Guatemala) to provide medical and dental care if this were necessary. In case of any emergency, you must always call the emergency phone number so they indicate what clinic you should go to.

Before the child arrives in the US, you will have the following documents:

- General Guide for Parents
- Insurance information and magnet to be put in a visible place
- Personal data and identification of the participant
- Original of the legal document
- Copy of the medical certificate
- Photocopy of Passport and Visa (Passports are at school)
- Information to install Skype as an alternative for free communication
- Information on flight # and departure and arrival times

Host Families (frequently asked questions)

- a. **What shall I do if the child gets sick? Do the children have medical insurance coverage?** **YES**, the children have a medical, dental, and travel insurance coverage, which is very complete. Before the children arrive in the USA, the coordinators send their corresponding ID along with a magnet for the family in the USA (in order to put it in a visible place). It has an ID, 24-hour service phone number, and emergency phone numbers.
- b. **Do the children bring money? Do they cover their own expenses?** **YES**, parents in Guatemala give the kids pocket money, in addition to the fee established by the school, so the kids may contribute with their personal expenses and purchase of souvenirs or other stuff.

Host family



- c. **Do they speak English? Do they communicate well?** The children attend bilingual schools and, some of them, attend trilingual (German, English, and Spanish) schools. They have been tested on their English level before being able to participate in the program and should be at least at an intermediate level. Some of them are fluent and communicate more. Others have an excellent written English, but are not so fluent. Part of the program aims at the kids practicing what they have learned since they were children and improving it. All of them go through a process of adaptation and should get used to the language in the first two weeks. At first they will translate and take a little while to answer. We always ask the families to be patient and understanding during this part of the process.
- d. **What happens if the child misses his/her family or gets homesick?** The children are prepared during 7 months for this experience. The process begins with the corresponding tests (English, academic in general, behavioral, and psychological profile). Not all of the children that are willing to participate can do it. The program psychologist may recommend that a child waits for one or more years when he/she does not fulfill the requirements. That gives our program the first chance to know who may be suitable for the experience. However, some kids, as is normal during the process, might feel melancholic some days or might miss their families. This is normal and they get over it with a little bit of attention. During their preparation, they receive important information about this situation, which could happen, and how to handle if this were to happen.
- e. **What happens if there is misbehavior at school or with the family?** The Guatemalan participant, as well as his/her parents, knows that with one serious misbehavior reported by the school or family, the child would be withdrawn from the program and taken back to his/her country.
- f. **Do they have visa? YES,** they have a tourist visa. Most of them have traveled to the United States (Los Angeles, Florida, New York, etc.) on family trips or tours. If a child does not have visa, he /she won't be allowed to participate in the program. Staying in the country is not an objective of the program in any way. We don't do the visa process for them.