



International Medical Relief

GUATEMALA

PROVIDING COMMUNITY HEALTH
TO POPULATIONS MOST IN NEED



| GUATEMALA



PRE-FIELD BRIEFING PACKET

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ABOUT THIS PACKET

This packet has been created to serve as a resource for the GUATEMALA Medical/Dental Team.

This packet is information about the country and can be read at your leisure or on the airplane. The final section of this booklet is specific to the areas we will be working near (however, not the actual clinic locations) and contains information you may want to know before the trip.

The contents herein are not for distributional purposes and are intended for the use of the team and their families. Sources of the information all come from public record and documentation. You may access any of the information and more updates directly from the World Wide Web and other public sources.



BACKGROUND



Guatemala is a country in Central America bordering the Northern Pacific Ocean, the Gulf on Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, Honduras, and Belize. Two mountain chains enter Guatemala from west to east, with a small desert, sand dunes, and hills in-between. The government system is a presidential republic; the chief of state and head of government is the president. Guatemala has a mixed economic system which includes a variety of emerging private freedom combined with centralized economic planning and government regulation.

(www.whc.unesco.org).

Read more: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

EXTENDING YOUR STAY

TIKAL NATIONAL PARK

Tikal National Park is located in Northern Guatemala's Petén Province within a large forest region often referred to as the Maya Forest, which extends into neighboring Mexico and Belize. Embedded within the much larger Maya Biosphere Reserve, exceeding two million hectares and contiguous with additional conservation areas, Tikal National Park is one of the few World Heritage properties inscribed according to both natural and cultural criteria for its extraordinary biodiversity and archaeological importance. It comprises 57,600 hectares of wetlands, savannah, tropical broadleaf, and palm forests with thousands of architectural and artistic remains of the Mayan civilization from the Pre-classic Period (600 B.C.) to the decline and eventual collapse of the urban center around 900 AD. The diverse ecosystems and habitats harbor a wide spectrum of neo-tropical fauna and flora. Five cats, including Jaguar and Puma, several species of monkeys and anteaters and more than 300 species of birds are among the notable wildlife. The forests comprise more than 200 tree species and over 2000 higher plants have been recorded across the diverse habitats. (Photo: Lionel Lalaite



LA AURORA ZOO

Considered to be one of the best zoos in Central America, La Aurora opened in 1924. This small zoo offers four permanent exhibits: Africa, Asia, Granita, and American. Not only does this zoo give visitors the chance to learn more about Guatemala’s animals, it also has a large collection of Central American creatures. Experience animals including giraffes, elephants, farm animals, lions, tigers, pythons, hippos and more. The zoo does a good job living up to its mission - to educate, conserve and rehabilitate animals. It even offers lectures and other programs daily. (Photo: www.whc.unesco.org)



ANTIGUA



BACKGROUND

Built 1,530.17 m above sea level in an earthquake-prone region, Antigua Guatemala, the capital of the Captaincy-General of Guatemala, was founded in 1524 as Santiago de Guatemala. It was subsequently destroyed by fire caused by an uprising of the indigenous population, re-established in 1527 and entirely buried as a result of earthquakes and an avalanche in 1541. The third location, in the Valley of Panchoy or Pacán, was inaugurated in March 1543 and served for 230 years. It survived natural disasters of floods, volcanic eruptions and other serious tremors until 1773 when the Santa Marta earthquakes destroyed much of the town. At this point, authorities ordered the relocation of the capital to a safer location region, which became Guatemala City, the county’s modern capital. Some residents stayed behind in the original town, however, which became referred to as “La Antigua Guatemala”.

Antigua was the cultural, economic, religious, political and educational center for the entire region until the capital was moved. In the space of under three centuries the city acquired a number of superb monuments.

The pattern of straight lines established by the grid of north-south and east-west streets and inspired by the Italian Renaissance, is one of the best examples in Latin American town planning and all that remains of the 16th-century city. Most of the surviving civil, religious, and civic buildings date from the 17th and 18th centuries and constitute magnificent examples of colonial architecture in the Americas. These buildings reflect a regional stylistic variation known as Barroco antiguo. Distinctive characteristics of this architectural style include the use of decorative stucco for interior and exterior ornamentation, main facades with a central window niche and often a deeply-carved tympanum, massive buildings, and low bell towers designed to withstand the region’s frequent earthquakes. Among the many significant historical buildings, the Palace of the Captains General, the Casa de la Moneda, the Cathedral, the Universidad de San Carlos, Las Capuchinas, La Merced, Santa Clara, among others, are worth noting.



The city lay mostly abandoned for almost a century until the mid-1800s when increased agricultural production, particularly coffee and grain, brought new investment to the region. The original urban core is small, measuring approximately 775 meters from north to south and 635 meters east to west, covering 49.57 hectares. (Photo: Rainbow Travel Center)

Antigua contains living traces of Spanish culture with its principal monuments, built in the Baroque style of the 18th century preserved today as ruins. It was a center for the exportation of religious images and statues to the rest of the American continent and to Spain during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Interestingly, Antigua is one the earliest and outstanding examples of city planning in Latin America in which the basic grid plan, dating from 1543, has been maintained. Its religious, private and government buildings are outstanding evidences of Spanish colonial architecture in Antigua.

The many churches and monasteries in Antigua Guatemala testify to the influence of the Christian church, during the colonial period, on every aspect of daily life in the city. Barroco antiguo developed in this area, a regional adaptation of the Baroque style designed to withstand the earthquakes common in the region.

INTEGRITY

Antigua has retained the integrity of its 16th-century layout and the physical integrity of most of its built heritage. The relocation transfer of the capital after the 1773 earthquake and the abandonment of the area by most of its population permitted the preservation of many of its monumental Baroque-style buildings as ruins. In addition to vulnerability to natural disasters, including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and hurricanes, the conditions of integrity for the property are threatened by tourist exploitation and uncontrolled growth. Further concerns on potential erosion of integrity include the illegal construction and gentrification as well as increased traffic through the historic district.

AUTHENTICITY

Due to the partial abandonment of the city in 1776, and the regulations prohibiting the repair and construction of new buildings, the city’s 16th-century Renaissance grid pattern and Baroque-style monumental buildings and ruins have survived along with cobblestone streets, plazas with fountains, and domestic architecture. (Photo: wikipedia)



While some of the original residences have been fully restored, new construction in recent years has followed a neo-colonial or “Antigua Style”, which impacts the conditions of authenticity. Additional concerns relate to new development that has been inserted into existing ruins. For example the modern hotel (Casa Santo Domingo) was constructed within the ruins of the Santo Domingo church and monastery, which also impact the form and function of buildings. Adaptative re-use of historic buildings, driven by tourism development pressures, is also a matter of concern to be addressed through the enforcement of regulations and development of adequate conservation guidelines.

PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Legal protection for Antigua Guatemala was established in 1944, when the city was declared a national monument with the intention to protect it from uncontrolled industrial and urban development. However, as responsibility was not given to a specific institution, the actual enforcement of protective and regulatory measures was minimal. The Pan-American Institute of Geography and History declared it an American Historical Monument in 1965 which took affect four years later with the approval of Article 61 of the Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, Legislative Decree 60-69 (Law for the Protection of the City of La Antigua Guatemala). The establishment of the “National Council for the Protection of Antigua Guatemala” in 1972 created an institution responsible for this protection and restoration of the city’s monuments.



Modern development pressure and increased tourism in the area have required more protection for the historic area and certain initiatives, at both the community and legislative levels, have been undertaken. These include recently developed tools for promoting local awareness, the participation by the community association Salvemos Antigua (Save Antigua), as well as a public education campaign (with a newsletter, schoolchildren programs etc.) supported by the Japanese government. The revision of Antigua’s Protection Law, which requires approval of Congress, has also been promoted to adequately

respond to existing factors and threats. Sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the property will require not only the updating and enforcement of legislative and regulatory measures, but also the definition and efficient protection of a the buffer zone and the sustained implementation of a master plan. The latter will need to include provisions for risk preparedness and disaster risk management, particularly in light of the vulnerability of the property. Comprehensive visitor management and clear conservation guidance and policies, will also be crucial for the property. (Photo: www.greyline.com)

www.msu.com

PUBLIC HEALTH

Health Care System Overview

Today, the Guatemalan health care system is split into three separate divisions: the public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit sectors. Within the public sector, there is the Ministry of Health and Social Security (MOH), the Guatemalan Social Security Institute (IGSS), and the Military Health Service. This sector of the health care system formally covers about 88% of the population. The private sector, which accounts for about 12% of the population, includes many for-profit providers, non-profit entities, and traditional local providers. The public sector works to provide care through hospitals, health facilities, and various health centers, whereas the private sector allocates resources within private offices, clinics, and hospitals.

Very few funds are allocated to health care within Guatemala. As a share of GDP, health care spending in Guatemala is one of the lowest in Central America (2.6 percent). The GDP expenditure shows that few funds are allocated to the health care system in Guatemala. In total, the Guatemalan government's expenditures on health were about \$196 US dollars in 2010. This amount was significantly less than the total Central American average (\$350) and the average Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) expenditures (\$672). The health care system requires more funds to improve the coverage and overall health care system in Guatemala.

The Peace Accords, which were signed in 1996, called for a change in health provision goals. In 1997, the MOH established a program called the Expansion of Coverage Program (PEC), which worked to improve the availability of health and nutrition services to young children and women in rural areas of Guatemala. As Pena explains, current MOH services do not cover the poor, rural population of Guatemala, making the PEC critical to the rural population. Ever since its creation, the PEC has expanded immensely, now covering about 54% of the

health and nutrition needs of rural Guatemalans. The coverage program works with NGOs in the area to promote good health and nutrition to populations who lack sufficient health care. The services covered by the PEC include care for women and infants, illnesses and emergency care, and environmental care.

Primary Care

Health care is a right in Guatemala but in practice, limited resources and over all access to care result in poor outcomes and low prevention scores.

Compared to the United States and other high-income nations, physician density in Guatemala is quite low. Physician population density in Guatemala is 0.93 and 0.37 physicians per 1,000 people. WHO estimates that countries with fewer than 23 healthcare workers (including physicians, nurses, and midwives) per 10,000 people will likely fail to achieve adequate coverage rates for primary healthcare, as defined by the Millennium Development goals. Therefore, the number of doctors in Guatemala is likely insufficient to achieve adequate coverage for primary healthcare needs.

Access to basic healthcare in Central America largely depends on socioeconomic status and environment (urban or rural). Guatemala has worked to improve access and quality of care, particularly in rural settings. Despite improvements to health services and systems, rural populations still have difficulty accessing basic health services. In Guatemala, it is estimated that basic health and nutrition services meet only 54% of the needs of the rural population. However, the majority of health services are located in the most developed cities, not easily accessible for rural and indigenous populations. Minors from rural and often underserved regions may also seek care from traditional healers, such as curanderos or folk healers. Curanderismo exists throughout Latin America, and practitioners treat a wide range of ailments including illnesses recognized by modern medicine as well as "folk illness" specific to the local population.

MALNUTRITION

Nearly one-half of Guatemala's children under age five are chronically malnourished, one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world. Malnutrition is frequently related to a lack of access to clean water. 58% of indigenous children are malnourished and 44% of children overall are malnourished (*Marini, Alessandra; Gragnolati, Michele, 2003*).

PARASITES

Parasites present one of the biggest threats to health in Guatemala. Many of the common parasites in developing countries like Guatemala are spread through contamination of both water and food. Some of the effects of parasites include intestinal obstructions, which can hinder the body from absorbing nutrients, lead to a loss of appetite, impair long term growth, induce vomiting, cause anemia and anorexia, and in severe cases, cause death. Symptoms can also include intense abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, and fever.

E. histolytic is a parasite that is very common among children in Guatemala. *Entamoeba histolytica* is well recognized as a pathogenic amoeba, associated with intestinal and extraintestinal infections and contracted by ingesting whole cysts through fecal matter in contaminated food, water, on hands, and through sexual contact. (Photo: *E. histolytic*, Wikipedia) (<https://www.cdc.gov/dpdx/amebiasis/index.html>)



It has been seen that the prevalence of parasites is significantly higher among younger children and those who are malnourished. Parasites are usually transferred through contaminated water, making them dangerous because they are able to induce malnutrition by consuming the body's nutrients, thus impeding a child's

physical development. For school children who are infected with parasites, cognitive functioning can drastically decrease, directly impacting their education. School children who have been treated for parasites immediately perform significantly better in school settings. Parasite infections can also vary based on access to clean water and whether or not sewage disposal is present. Parasites can have serious long-term consequences in that they directly affect development and health for decades after. However, inexpensive, single-dose medications exist that can fully treat these parasitic infections.

VACCINATIONS:

Despite challenges in accessing basic primary care services in Guatemala, the country reports high immunization coverage among children in the country. Depending on the vaccine, coverage ranges from 93% to 98% in Guatemala, respectively. Guatemala administers vaccines in accordance with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Expanded Program on Immunization.

FAMILY PLANNING

Unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections are among the greatest health risks and barriers to education for indigenous Guatemalan adolescent girls. Between 2008 and 2012, more than one in ten Guatemalan women had given birth by the age of 18. Unfortunately, sexual and reproductive education is uncommon in schools and other institutions for indigenous youth, as it is considered a sensitive and often taboo subject from a religious and cultural standpoint.

The most recent Guatemala Reproductive Health Survey reports that 59% of young indigenous women surveyed (aged 15 to 24) had never received any type of formal talk or course in sexual health. Of those women who did report receiving some form of sexual health education, less than a third report receiving information on sexually transmitted infection or methods of contraception.



MAYAN WOMEN AND A HUSBAND RECEIVE FAMILY PLANNING COUNSELING AT THE HEALTH CENTER IN CHIMALTENANGO, (PHOTO: USAID)

SEXUAL- AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:

Sexual- and gender-based violence has been increasing throughout Central America and Mexico. Guatemala reports extremely high rates of femicide. Femicide rates are up to five times higher than overall homicide rates in the majority of Northern, Western, and Southern European countries. Gangs and other armed criminal groups often perpetrate violence against women, and domestic violence throughout Central America is widespread.

VECTOR BORNE DISEASES:

Guatemala is known to have one of the highest rates of malaria infection in Central America. Until recent efforts of educational programs, reports show a 95% reduction in cases. Malaria is not an issue in Antigua, Guatemala City or Lago Atitlan area. Dengue fever is transmitted by the Aedes mosquito and is a problem more in the rainy season. These mosquitoes are found in urban areas, bite during the day and love stagnant water. There is no treatment for this disease except bed or hospital rest.

www.cdc.gov

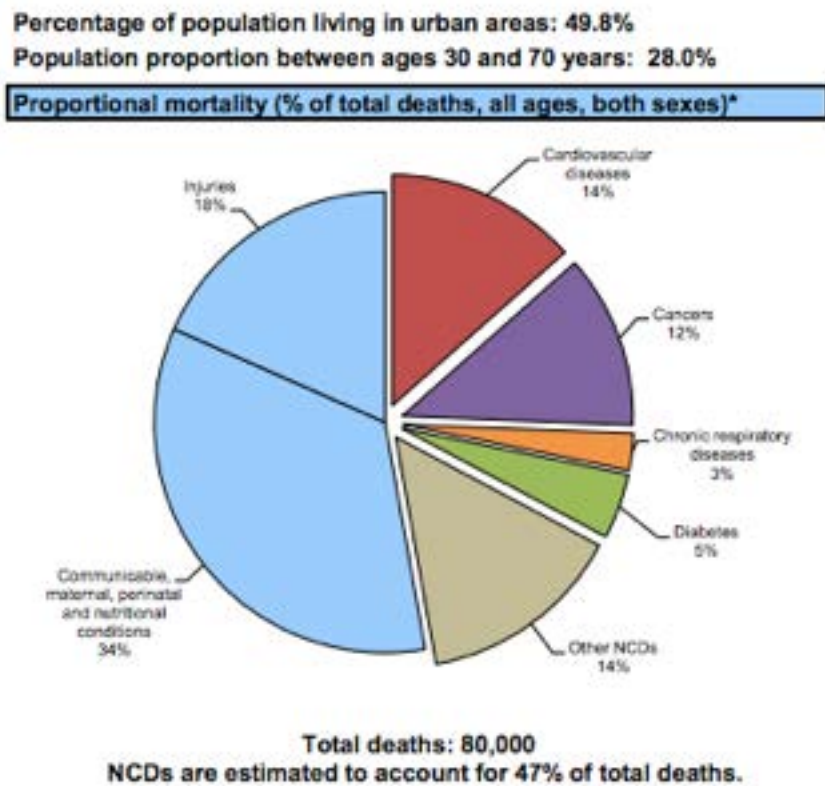
CHRONIC ILLNESS

Obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and hypertension are all increasing health concerns in Guatemala. Non-communicable diseases account for 47% of all deaths, according to the World Health Organization in 2014. Hypertension, arthritis, and diabetes are the three most commonly reported chronic conditions.

Indigenous Peoples

In the public health setting, indigenous peoples often face discrimination and poor health care.

Taking into account the language barriers, diet, and living conditions, the Mayan population suffers enormously when it comes to proper health care. The life expectancy for Mayans can be up to 10 or 15 years lower than other Guatemalans. The indigenous Mayan communities were greatly affected by the 36 year internal conflict and a difficult to access health care system with an emphasis on private care has not benefited indigenous peoples. Since the Civil War (ended in 1996), the Mayan population generally resides in poverty stricken areas, and therefore has limited access to the healthcare that is available to the Ladinos, or non-indigenous population. Poverty also disproportionately affects indigenous peoples, and especially children, with a high risk of malnutrition, drug and alcohol addiction, and gangs and organized crime all contributing to a high health risk (Marshall, K. 2016). Additionally, poverty leads to children working (illegal gang work; forced begging) to help support the family. (Wikipedia)



Indifference to violence (psychological, symbolic, and physical), including racism, and different expressions of discrimination and mistreatment associated to poverty, language barriers, gender, ethnicity and social class are common issues faced by patients. (Cerón et al. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 2016).

LANGUAGE AND DIET

In Guatemala, about 45% of the Ladino population lives in poverty, while about 91% of the indigenous population succumbs to extreme poverty levels. This large difference appears in other aspects of life as well, like family planning, susceptibility to disease, education level, and access to health care. Such inequalities can largely be attributed to a large language barrier between the indigenous population and the non-indigenous peoples. Generally, the indigenous people of Guatemala speak only a variety of local Mayan languages. In relation to health care, these language barriers can be significant. Most of the medical professionals that serve the indigenous communities are Ladino, and speak Spanish only. Communicating health related issues to a patient under these conditions becomes an obstacle, which in turn causes indigenous people to avoid health care centers altogether. The indigenous population is unable to communicate with the doctors directly, which is both difficult and embarrassing. Ishida et al. discovered that the combination of poverty and language barriers made indigenous women less likely to seek services from health care providers.

The Mayan diet is different from the diet of non-indigenous Guatemalans. Throughout their history, the Maya have used maize as a principal crop. Staple foods of the Mayan diet today are corn and beans. The better cash crops like greens, tomatoes, fruits, eggs, and poultry are mainly sold to Ladinos and are not purchased by Mayans. Therefore, Mayan nutrition is very poor because it includes little besides starches and protein. Corn has a significant amount of carbohydrates, which in turn increases blood sugar levels. This increase in blood sugar makes diabetes a very common disease within the Mayan population. Also, with this lack of crucial nutrients, malnutrition is very prominent in the indigenous population.

LIVING CONDITIONS

The Mayan people frequently live in rural villages of Guatemala, which are generally known to be impoverished areas. About 80% of indigenous Guatemalans live below the "international poverty line." Very few Mayan families have the economic stability to devote money towards health care. With the high prices of medications and the poor quality of health posts, impoverished patients refuse to use or trust the westernized health care system. For centuries, the relationship between the Ladinos and the Mayans has been antagonistic. Throughout the period of the Guatemalan Civil War, Mayans were excluded from land and water resources as well as educational, health care, political, and economic resources. Even in today's modern age, the effects of exclusion and deprivation from the war are still felt by many indigenous Mayans. This directly affects health care because the Mayan population does not trust Western medicine and hospitals. Similarly, the Ladino doctors that work in the health field make the indigenous people feel powerless and guarded instead of supported. Many indigenous Guatemalans survive on below-subsistence agriculture. Farms are not large enough to sustain large-scale subsistence farming, making the overall yield exceptionally low. Because of the limited amount of farmland, its unequal distribution, and the growing population, poverty continues to ravish the Mayan civilizations. The concrete living distance also plays a role in health care accessibility for indigenous population. More than likely, these rural villages where the Mayans reside are located close to an hour walk away from any health clinic or post. The inaccessibility of the clinics leads to fewer visits and more health complications in the indigenous population.



Guatemala: WHO statistical profile

Basic statistics

Indicators	Statistics	Year
Population (thousands)	15468	2013
Population aged under 15 (%)	40	2013
Population aged over 60 (%)	7	2013
Median age (years)	19	2013
Population living in urban areas (%)	51	2013
Total fertility rate (per woman)	3.8	2013
Number of live births (thousands)	480.2	2013
Number of deaths (thousands)	80.6	2013
Birth registration coverage (%)	97	2006-2009
Cause-of-death registration coverage (%)	92	2010-2012
Gross national income per capita (PPP int \$)	7130	2013
WHO region	Americas	2013
World Bank income classification	Lower middle	2013

Source:
Country statistics and global health estimates
by WHO and UN partners

For more information visit the Global Health Observatory
<http://www.who.int/gbd/>

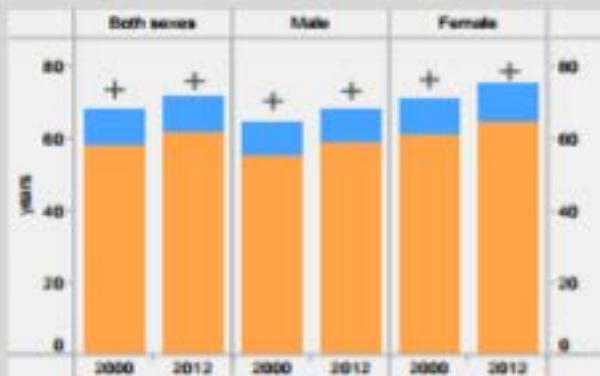
Last updated: January 2015

Life expectancy (years), 2012

	Country	WHO region	World Bank income group	
Life expectancy	At birth	72	76	66
	At age 60	21	22	17
Healthy life expectancy	At birth	62	67	57

Life expectancy at birth for both sexes increased by 4 year(s) over the period of 2000-2012; the WHO region average increased by 2 year(s) in the same period.

In 2012, healthy expectancy in both sexes was 9 year(s) lower than overall life expectancy at birth. This lost healthy life expectancy represents 9 equivalent year(s) of full health lost through years lived with morbidity and disability.

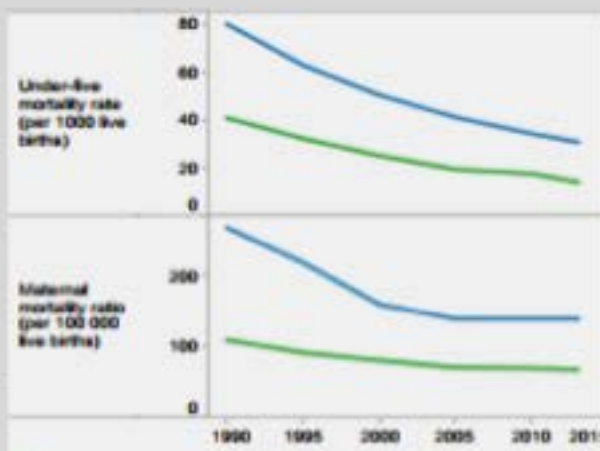


Legend:
 ■ WHO regional life expectancy at birth
 ■ Healthy life expectancy at birth
 ■ Lost healthy life expectancy

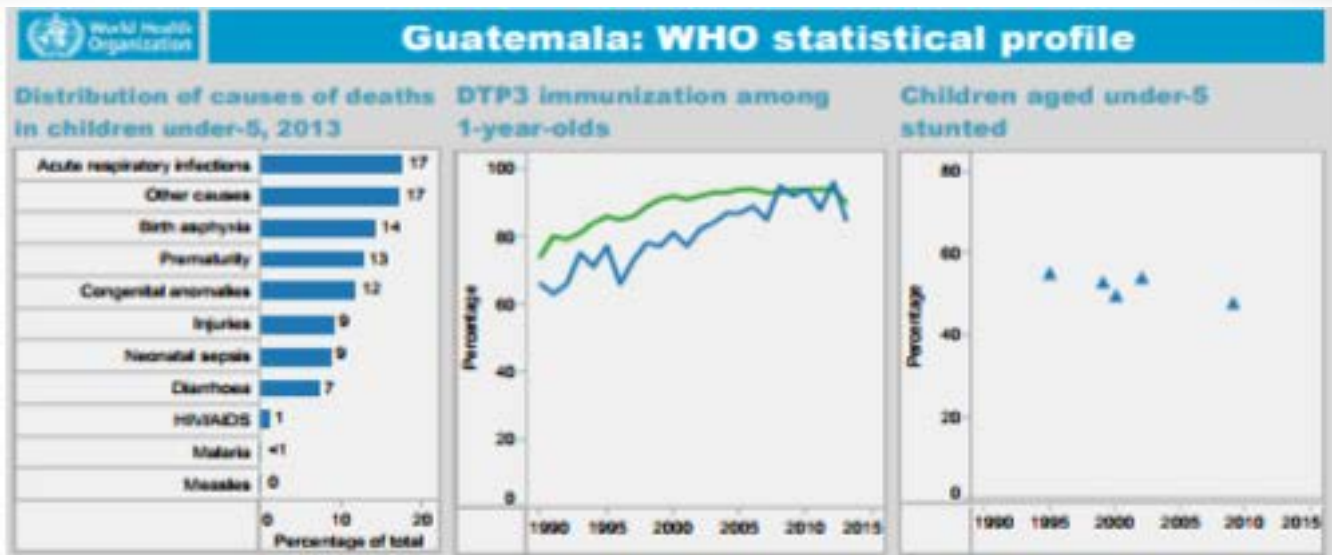
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Indicators	Statistics	
	Baseline*	Latest**
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	81	31
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births)	270	140
Deaths due to HIV/AIDS (per 100 000 population)	13.8	22.0
Deaths due to malaria (per 100 000 population)	0.1	0.0
Deaths due to tuberculosis among HIV-negative people (per 100 000 population)	5.1	1.6

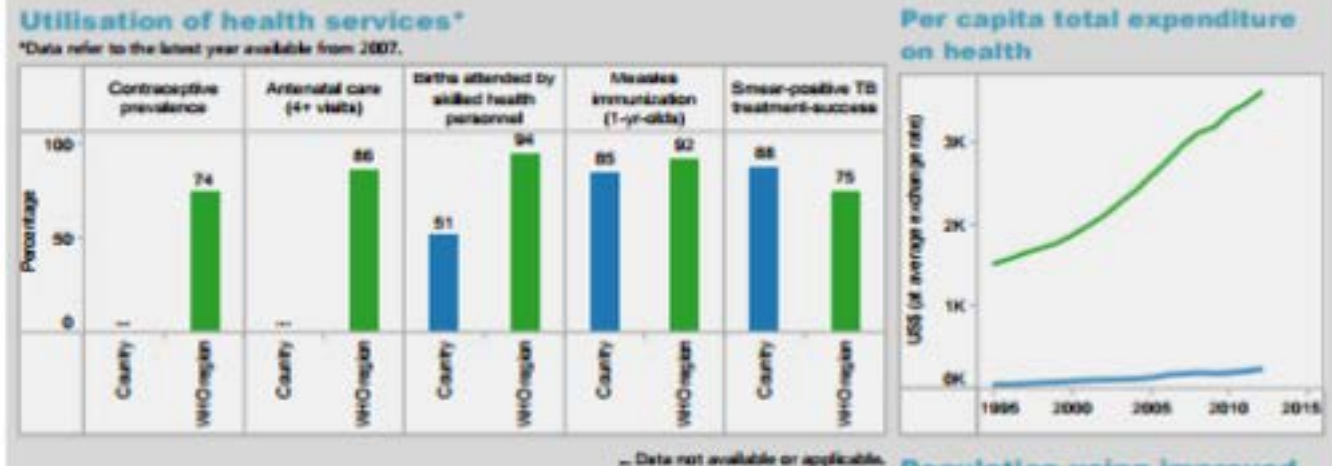
*1990 for under-five mortality and maternal mortality; 2000 for other indicators
 **2012 for deaths due to HIV/AIDS and malaria; 2013 for other indicators



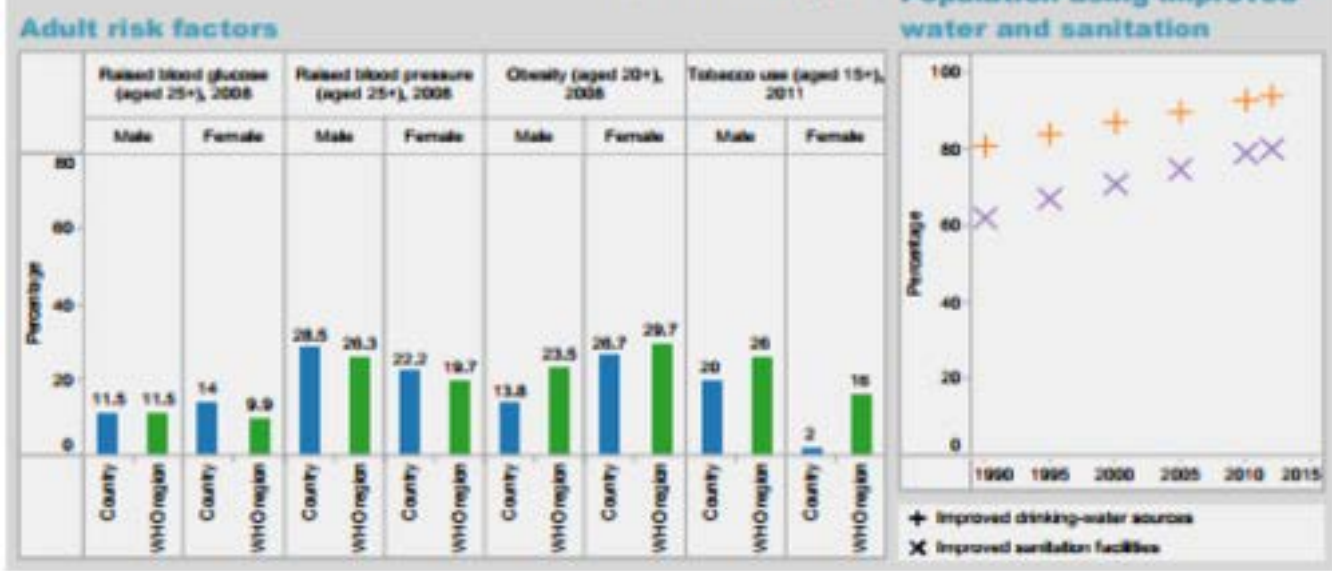
Legend:
 ■ Country
 ■ WHO region



Source: Country statistics and global health estimates by WHO and UN partners
For more information visit the Global Health Observatory (<http://www.who.int/gho/en/>)
Last updated: January 2015



... Data not available or applicable.



World Health Organization **Guatemala: WHO statistical profile**

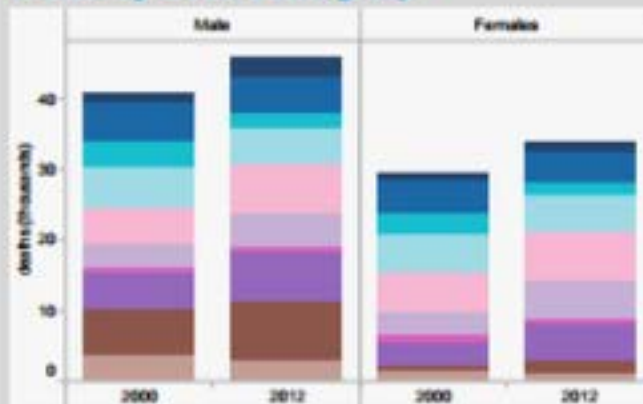
Top 10 causes of death

Lower respiratory infections was the leading cause of death, killing 9.6 thousand people in 2012

	No of deaths (000s) 2012	Crude death rate 2000-2012	Change in rank 2000-2012
Lower respiratory infections (12%)	9.6		
Interpersonal violence (11.5%)	9.2		
Ischaemic heart disease (7.3%)	5.8		
Diabetes mellitus (4.8%)	3.7		
HIV/AIDS (4.3%)	3.3		
Stroke (3.7%)	3.0		
Diarrhoeal diseases (3.7%)	3.0		
Cirrhosis of the liver (3.7%)	2.9		
Protein-energy malnutrition (2.8%)	2.2		
Birth asphyxia and birth trauma (2.7%)	2.1		

Rank decreased increased no change

Deaths by broad cause group

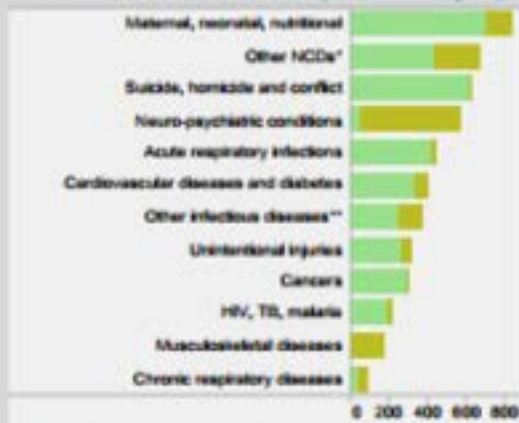


- Causes**
- HIV, TB, malaria
 - Acute respiratory infections
 - Other infectious diseases
 - Maternal, neonatal, nutritional
 - Cardiovascular diseases and diabetes
 - Cancers
 - Chronic respiratory diseases
 - Other NCDs
 - Suicide, homicide and conflict
 - Unintentional injuries

Burden of disease, 2012

Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) are the sum of years of life lost due to premature mortality (YLL) and years of healthy life lost due to disability (YLD).

DALYs, YLL and YLD (thousands) by broad cause group



*Other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) including non-malignant neoplasms; endocrine, blood and immune disorders; sense organ, digestive, genitourinary, and skin diseases; oral conditions and congenital anomalies.
 ** Infectious diseases other than acute respiratory diseases, HIV, TB and malaria.

YLL YLD

Probability of dying, 2012

Probability of dying between relevant exact ages, for a person experiencing the 2012 age-specific mortality risks throughout their life.

Before age 15, all causes	Male	15%
	Female	12%
Before age 70, all causes	Male	54%
	Female	40%
Between ages 15 and 49, from maternal causes	Female	8%
Between ages 30 and 70, from 4 major noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)*	Both sexes	14%

*Cancers, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes

Source: Country statistics and global health estimates by WHO and UN partners
 For more information visit the Global Health Observatory <http://gho.int/global-health-burden-diseases/en/>
 Last updated: January 2015

HISTORY OF GUATEMALA

THE GREATER GUATEMALA TO 1821



The long narrow strip of Central America, known in its entirety to the Spanish as Guatemala, is among the earliest of colonial conquests on the mainland. Pedro de Alvarado, a leading member of Cortés' small party in the conquest of Mexico (1519-21), is sent south in 1523 to subdue the smaller area now known as Guatemala. In 1524 he pushes on into El Salvador. In the same year Spanish conquistadors enter Costa Rica and Nicaragua from the east, invading from Panama. Honduras, the buffer region between east and west, is disputed between the rival groups of Spaniards. An advance guard from Panama gets there first. Cortés sends a force from Mexico, which eventually prevails.

These rivalries persuade the Spanish crown to treat Central America as a special case. In 1539 it is established as the captaincy general of Guatemala. This is part of the wider viceroyalty of New Spain (administered from Mexico City) but the captain general, operating from his own capital at Antigua, has considerable autonomy in local affairs. The arrangement survives until the end of the colonial period (except that the capital moves to Guatemala City after Antigua is destroyed by an earthquake in 1773) and it is this larger region of Guatemala that declares independence on 15 September 1821. Under Agustín de Iturbide, Mexico won its freedom from Spain three weeks after Guatemala.

CENTRAL AMERICAN FEDERATION: 1823-1838

The colonist of Guatemala recognized the forceful leadership of Iturbide. In response, the colonists offered to merge their region in 1821 with Mexico. The link holds when Iturbide makes himself emperor in 1822. Guatemala decided to assert its own independence in 1823 with Iturbide's sudden fall and flight from Mexico. The region from the southern border of Mexico to Panama now declares itself to be a new nation. It is to be known as the Central American Federation, with its capital in Guatemala City.

Since the other constituent provinces of the old captaincy general of Guatemala (El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica) have intentions which are at odds with the central government in Guatemala City, the transition to statehood would not be smooth. Even when Guatemala was established it soon after was in political chaos. There is almost a permanent civil war between The Liberal and conservative factions.

The dominant figure is the Honduran general Francisco Morazán, who became president in 1830. He attempted to introduce liberal reforms, but by 1838 the federation is in such chaos that it has effectively ceased to exist. The five regions carried on as independent nations.



A CENTURY OF CAUDÍLLOS: 1840-1944

The first century of Guatemala's independence provides a series of four prime examples of the Caudillo as the classic Latin American dictator. The first is Rafael Carrera, an illiterate mestizo who with the support of the Indians and the rural clergy topples in 1840 the liberal government of Francisco Morazán. Profoundly conservative in his attitudes, Carrera restores the privileges of the colonial period. He favors the church and the landed classes, and brings the Jesuits back into the life of the nation. Declaring himself president for life in 1854, he died in office in 1865. If Carrera has epitomized the conservative thread in Latin American tradition, the next Caudillo in Guatemala is an equally characteristic liberal. Justo Rufino Barrios is one of a group of liberals who seize power in a revolution in 1871, and in 1873 he becomes president. The dramatic changes which he introduces over the next twelve years win him the title of 'the Reformer'. Barrios dismantled most of the antique structure which his predecessor has painstakingly reassembled. He expels the Jesuits again, closes monasteries, seizes church property, curtails the power of the aristocracy and sets up a system of secular education. His economic policies are equally liberal, opening up the country to foreign investment. Like the previous liberal ruler of Guatemala, Francisco Morazán, Barrios is a keen enthusiast for the union of the Central American republics. Failing to make any diplomatic headway, he tries to prevail by force. In 1885 he invades neighboring El Salvador and is killed on the field of battle, at Chalchuapa.



The next two Caudillos in Guatemala's quartet are again technically liberals, but dictatorial rule characterizes their regimes rather more than any trace of idealism. Manuel Estrada Cabrera, president from 1898, keeps himself in office by a succession of rigged elections while building up a personal fortune at the nation's expense. The congress in Guatemala City finally gets rid of Estrada Cabrera in 1920 by declaring him insane. He died four years later in Gaol.

Last in the sequence is Jorge Ubico, a general who becomes president in 1931. He enjoys the nickname Tata (father), and is popular with the Indians whose lot he undoubtedly improves. He ran a police state, in the manner of being brutally perfected around the world by other more powerful dictators at this period. In his formal suspension of freedom of speech and press, in June 1944, he goes a step too far. He provokes a general strike which rapidly leads to his resignation and flight abroad.

DEMOCRACY AND THE CIA: 1944-1954



The events of 1944 constitute Guatemala's most significant revolution. After the departure of Ubico, a left-wing uprising in October removes an interim government and brings in a revolutionary junta. The result is Guatemala's first democratic constitution and a presidential election which is won, with 85% of the vote, by a university lecturer, Juan José Arévalo.

Arévalo introduces much needed reforms in the fields of education, health and civil liberties. The

next presidential election, in 1950, is preceded by a sinister event - the assassination of the leading right-wing candidate, Francisco Javier Arana. It leaves the field clear for his left-wing rival, Jacobo Arbenz.

Arbenz, who has been minister of war in Arévalo's government, takes office as president in 1951. He adds to Arévalo's policies strong measures of land reform, expropriating (for minimal compensation) any land left

uncultivated and allocating it to peasants. A great deal of this land belongs to the United Fruit Company, Guatemala's largest employer (and in the habit of acquiring more land than it needs just to hinder competition). This treatment of a major US company causes outrage in Washington and combines with growing unease in the Eisenhower administration at communists being allowed a share in Arbenz's administration. The result is a plot engineered by the CIA. The CIA arranges for an army of Guatemalan exiles to be assembled and trained in Honduras (on United Fruit Company land) under Carlos Castillo Armas. With this force Armas invades from Honduras in June 1954. The military in Guatemala, disenchanted with Arbenz's radical policies, offer no resistance. Arbenz flees to Mexico. Armas emerges as the presidential choice of a new military junta. Armas reverses nearly all the reforms introduced in the decade since 1944. He has less than three years in which to do so, because he is assassinated in 1957. Guatemala, after its first experiment with democracy, returns to violence and turmoil.

DEATH SQUADS AND GUERRILLAS: 1960-1996

Under a bewildering succession of rulers, most of them military, Guatemala is subject to the terrifying activities of mysterious death squads - apparently linked to the military and police, and with leftist opponents of the regime as their main victims. At the same time the mounting discontent of the Indian population, with the encouragement of Marxist revolutionaries, erupts in what becomes Latin America's longest guerrilla war. The various guerrilla groups eventually combine as the URNG (Unidad Revolucionario Nacional Guatemalteco, Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity). Warfare between the guerrilla groups and the government, beginning in 1960, costs eventually some 150,000 lives.

In 1995 an agreement is finally reached, in which the government acknowledges the rights of the indigenous Indian population. With this much achieved the four main groups comprising the URNG sign a peace treaty, in December 1996, which provides for them to become a political party. Meanwhile political life has returned to a semblance of normalcy with a new constitution in 1985 and the election in that year of the first civilian president for fifteen years (though this change does not subsequently prevent the military from intervening when it suits them). Early in 1996 the centrist Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen is elected president by a narrow margin over a right-wing candidate.

www.worldhistory.net

COUNTRY OVERVIEW



OVERVIEW

The Maya civilization flourished in Guatemala and surrounding regions during the first millennium A.D. After almost three centuries as a Spanish colony, Guatemala won its independence in 1821. During the second half of the 20th century, it experienced a variety of military and civilian governments, as well as a 36-year guerrilla war. In 1996, the government signed a peace agreement formally ending the internal conflict, which had left more than 200,000 people dead and had created, by some estimates, about 1 million refugees.

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FLAG

The Guatemalan flag consists of three equal vertical bands of light blue (hoist side), white, and light blue, with the coat of arms centered in the white band; the coat of arms includes a green and red quetzal (the national bird) representing liberty and a scroll bearing the inscription LIBERTAD 15 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 1821 (the original date of independence from Spain) all superimposed on a pair of crossed rifles signifying Guatemala's willingness to defend itself and a pair of crossed swords representing honor and framed by a laurel wreath symbolizing victory; the blue bands represent the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea; the white band denotes peace and purity. Note: one of only two national flags featuring a firearm, the other is Mozambique

www.cia.gov

DEMOGRAPHICS

Guatemala is a predominantly poor country that struggles in several areas of health and development, including infant, child, and maternal mortality, malnutrition, literacy, and contraceptive awareness and use. The country's large indigenous population is disproportionately affected. Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America and has the highest fertility rate in Latin America. It also has the highest population growth rate in Latin America, which is likely to continue because of its large reproductive-age population and high birth rate. Almost half of Guatemala's population is under age 19, making it the youngest population in Latin America. Guatemala's total fertility rate has slowly declined during the last few decades due in part to limited government-funded health programs. However, the birth rate is still more than three children per woman and is markedly higher among its rural and indigenous populations.

Guatemalans have a history of emigrating legally and illegally to Mexico, the United States, and Canada because of a lack of economic opportunity, political instability, and natural disasters. Emigration, primarily to the United States, escalated during the 1960 to 1996 civil war and accelerated after a peace agreement was signed. Thousands of Guatemalans who fled to Mexico returned after the war, but labor migration to southern Mexico continues.

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CLIMATE & WEATHER

Guatemala's climate is marked by a rainy season from May to September, and a dry season from October to April. Temperatures vary considerably throughout the country, primarily as a function of elevation. At some high elevations temperatures may only reach 55 degrees, while they are often in the upper 90's less than 100 vertical miles away at sea level.

www.stanford.edu

GEOGRAPHY

The westernmost nation in Central America, Guatemala shares borders with Mexico, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. From north to south, the greatest distance is 275 miles (443 kilometers) and from east to west the greatest distance is 250 miles (402 kilometers). Marked by its compressed diversity, this tightly consolidated country contains more than 40,000 square miles (100,00 square kilometers), numerous habitats and roughly 11 million people.

Guatemala contains geographical zones that range from the boiling hot black sands of the Pacific Coast to snow-capped volcanic peaks to the high elevation scrub forest of the Cuchumatanes to the dense hardwood jungles of the Peten region. On the west side of the country is two hundred miles of Pacific coastline. The climate here is tropical with thick summer rains. For years much of the highland population seasonally migrated to this region because this is where most of the sugar, banana and cotton farms are located. Roughly 50 km inland, the land rises to form one of two volcanic mountain ranges that run along the coastal border from northwest to the southeast. Guatemala has 37 major volcanoes, of which Tajumulco is the tallest at 4200 meters (almost 4200 feet). It is the highest peak in Central America. (Photo: www.stanford.edu)



A third region contains the capital city, Ciudad de Guatemala, and most of the country's population. This zone occurs in the heart of the Sierra Madres where the mountain ranges plateau. Nicknamed "land of eternal spring" annual temperatures in this region fluctuate between 62 degrees and 73 degrees. A final climatic region is in the Peten to the north, and along the eastern coastline. Although this area contains only 40,000 people, it covers approximately one-third of the national territory. Comprised of dense hardwood forest, much of this land has been logged but much remains as wilderness. Since most of the region's minerals are locked within the forest canopy, the soil in this region is poor and the land is generally not arable. Near the Caribbean coast in the forests of Cerro San Gil, more than half of the country's bird species can be found. Additionally the Caribbean coastline is one of Central America's richest marine resources.

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ECONOMY

Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America with a GDP per capita roughly half the average for Latin America and the Caribbean. The agricultural sector accounts for 13.5% of GDP and 31% of the labor force; key agricultural exports include sugar, coffee, bananas, and vegetables. Guatemala is the top remittance recipient in Central America as a result of Guatemala's large expatriate community in the US. These inflows are a primary source of foreign income, equivalent to over one-half of the country's exports and one-tenth of its GDP.

The 1996 peace accords, which ended 36 years of civil war, removed a major obstacle to foreign investment, and Guatemala has since pursued important reforms and macroeconomic stabilization. The Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) entered into force in July 2006, spurring increased

investment and diversification of exports, with the largest increases in ethanol and non-traditional agricultural exports. While CAFTA-DR has helped improve the investment climate, concerns over security, the lack of skilled workers, and poor infrastructure continue to hamper foreign direct investment.

The distribution of income remains highly unequal with the richest 20% of the population accounting for more than 51% of Guatemala's overall consumption. More than half of the population is below the national poverty line, and 23% of the population lives in extreme poverty. Poverty among indigenous groups, which make up more than 40% of the population, averages 79%, with 40% of the indigenous population living in extreme poverty. Nearly one-half of Guatemala's children under age five are chronically malnourished, one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world.

Guatemala is facing growing fiscal pressures, exacerbated by multiple corruption scandals that led to the resignation of the president, vice president, and numerous high-level economic officials in 2015.

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Thanks to prudent macroeconomic management, Guatemala has been one of the strongest economic performers in Latin America in recent years, with a GDP growth rate of 3.0 percent since 2012 and 4.1 percent in 2015. In 2016, the country's economy grew by 2.9 percent, according to the latest estimates, and is expected to grow by 3.4 percent in 2017.

Nevertheless, Guatemala, the biggest economy in Central America, has one of the highest inequality rates in Latin America, with some of the worst poverty, malnutrition and maternal-child mortality rates in the region, especially in rural and indigenous areas.

The World Bank study Poverty Assessment in Guatemala reported that the country reduced its poverty rate from 56 percent to 51 percent between 2000 and 2006. However, official figures indicate that poverty rose to 59.3 percent in 2014. Of all people living in poverty in the country, 52 percent are indigenous

Given Guatemala's capacity for macroeconomic recovery, the next few years represent an opportunity to reduce poverty through more rapid economic growth. While pro-poor policy reforms could yield marginal improvements, accelerating growth will be crucial to achieving the country's medium- and long-term social objectives.

Public investment is essential to achieving Guatemala's development goals, yet it remains constrained by a lack of resources. Additionally, the government collects the lowest share of public revenues in the world relative to the size of its economy.

Boosting growth will depend upon continued reforms to mobilize increased private investment and revenue to fund important pro-growth investments in infrastructure and human capital.

An increasingly important challenge for Guatemala is improving the levels of citizen security. High levels of crime and violence represent staggering economic costs for the country.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guatemala/overview>

Last Updated: Oct 10, 2017

EDUCATION

Today, primary school enrollment rates in Guatemala are almost 100% and there is nearly equal enrollment of boys and girls. First grade completion rates have increased dramatically (by 18%) in the last four years as a



result of the implementation of several quality education policies and programs. Still, more than 30% of students did not pass first grade in 2013. In addition, only about three-fourths of those enrolled in primary school graduate from 6th grade (80% of boys and 73% of girls), and the enrollment rate for middle school (7th-9th grades) is less than 40%.

Education quality is also a pressing issue. According to 2010 Ministry of Education data, 50% of third graders reach national standards in mathematics and just over 50% reach national standards in reading. Among sixth graders, only 45% reach national mathematics standards and only 30% reach national reading standards. Even when students are able to complete primary school, many do not acquire the necessary skills to advance. Furthermore, while

there are nominal national differences in school enrollment between boys and girls, the enrollment gap between rural and urban areas is significant.

In Guatemala, more than two million out-of-school youth between the ages of 15 and 24, including 600,000 in the Western Highlands, do not have basic life or vocational skills to enter the workforce. Youth face increasingly difficult conditions, including high levels of unemployment, social and economic marginalization, rapid urbanization, increasing crime, and lack of basic services. Long-term, sustainable development and improved equity in Guatemala will only be possible if education of children and youth continues to improve.

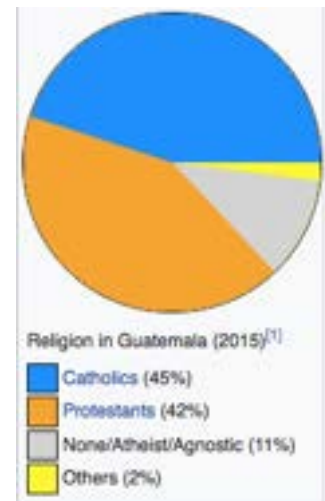
www.usaid.gov

RELIGION

Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion of Guatemalans. Among the Mayan, it is often heavily infused with beliefs of pre-Columbian origin. From the mid-20th century there has been a surge of conversions to Evangelical Protestantism (which offers strong encouragement of self-improvement), particularly among the poor. Protestants account for two-fifths of the population, one of the highest proportions in Latin America. The most important Roman Catholic shrine in Central America is the Black Christ of Esquipulas (1595), located in eastern Guatemala and carved by Quirio Cataño of Antigua Guatemala.

www.britanica.com

Roman Catholicism, which was introduced by the Spanish and modified by Maya interpretations and syncretism, was almost universal in Guatemala until the early part of the twentieth century, when Protestantism began to make significant headway among both Ladinos and Maya. Today it has been estimated that perhaps 40 percent or more adhere to a Protestant church or sect ranging from established churches with international membership to small local groups celebrating their own set of beliefs under the leadership of lay pastors.



Many Maya combine membership in a Christian fellowship with a continued set of beliefs and practices inherited from their ancient ancestors. Rituals may still be performed to ensure agricultural success, easy childbirth, recovery from illness, and protection from the elements (including eclipses) and to honor and remember the dead. The Garifuna still practice an Afro-Caribbean form of ancestor worship that helps to meld together families broken by migration, plural marriages, and a social environment hostile to people of their race and culture.

Many of the indigenous people believe in spirits of nature, especially of specific caves, mountains, and bodies of water, and their religious leaders regularly perform ceremonies connected with these sites. The Catholic Church has generally been more lenient in allowing or ignoring dual allegiances than have Protestants, who tend to insist on strict adherence to doctrine and an abandonment of all "non-Christian" beliefs and practices, including Catholicism.

Read more: <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guatemala.html#ixzz4zYb2ZoUN>

CULTURE

Guatemalan culture and Guatemalan customs are strongly influenced by the history of Guatemala. Guatemalan people are largely mestizo, a mixture of Spanish and Maya blood, while many villagers are direct Maya descendants. Guatemalan history was largely affected by the Maya civilization that lived throughout modern day Guatemala for nearly 600 years before collapsing around 900 AD. The multicultural Guatemalan society has directly influenced the country's customs, cuisine and people. Guatemalan cuisine, for example, varies depending on the region. However, many traditional Guatemalan foods are based on Maya cuisine, predominantly featuring ingredients like corn, chilies and beans. Their principal crop of the Maya was corn maize which continues to be very important today. Other popular dishes in Guatemala include enchiladas, quesadillas and tamales, although these are not to be confused with their Mexican counterparts. Another important part of Guatemalan culture is its music and fashion. Guatemalan people are known for their percussion bands featuring the marimba, the national instrument. Guatemalan fashion is also well known for its use of brightly colored yarn-textiles, capes, shirts, blouses, skirts and dresses. This is another reflection of Guatemalan history as bright colored fabrics were very popular with the Maya people.

Many Guatemalan holidays bring families, communities and visitors together in vibrant celebrations. Some commemorate historical events, others display religious imagery inspired by Catholicism and indigenous heritage, and all offer some reflection of the country's rich culture and intriguing past. Visitors are encouraged to consider these days when planning their Guatemala vacation.

Easter Week (Semana Santa in Spanish) is a festive time in Guatemala and particularly in Antigua, where famous religious processions take place through the streets of town. Men in purple robes carrying floats with images of Jesus and women wearing black carrying floats of Mary slowing march down cobbled roads and over beautiful carpets created just for the festival. These carpets, known as alfombras de Aserrin, splash vivid color over the city, with detailed expressions made of flowers, fruit, vegetables, and other materials. Each year on September 15th, Guatemala celebrates its independence from Spain which was won in 1821. Lively parades and other events occur to the beat of military bands and are back-dropped by buildings decorated with blue and white fabric. All Saints Day, on November 1st, is a day when giant kites fly through the sky and cemeteries are filled with life. The night before the holiday, many head to the graveyard to clean, repair, and repaint their loved ones' graves. The following day, the cemetery erupts into a full-fledged celebration, where families bring past family members' favorite foods and drinks and enjoy the festive tone set by mariachi bands and flowery decorations.

GENDER ROLES AND STATUSES

Division of Labor by Gender. Among both Maya and Ladinos, women are associated primarily with the domestic world and men work in agriculture, business, and manufacturing. However, well-educated professional women are accepted and often highly respected; many are owners and managers of businesses. More of these women are Ladinas than Mayas. Statistically, women are less educated and lower paid than their male counterparts. Their numbers exceed those of males in nursing, secretarial, and clerical jobs. The teaching force at all levels has attracted women as well as men, but men predominate.

In rural areas, Maya women and men may engage in agriculture, but the crops they grow are different. Men tend to grow basic grains such as corn and beans as well as export crops such as green beans and snow peas. Women grow vegetables and fruits for local consumption and sale, as well as herbs and spices.

Handicrafts also tend to be assigned according to gender. Pottery is most often made by Indian women and Ladino men. Similarly, Indian women are the only ones who weave on backstrap or stick looms, while both Indian and Ladino men weave on foot looms. Indian men knit woolen shoulder bags for their own use and for sale. Men of both ethnicities do woodworking and carpentry, bricklaying, and upholstering. Indian men carve images of saints, masks, slingshots, and decorative items for their own use or for sale. Men and boys fish, while women and girls as well as small boys gather wild foods and firewood. Women and children also tend sheep and goats.

Rural Ladinas do not often engage in agriculture. They concentrate on domestic work and cottage industries, especially those involving sewing, cooking, and processing of foods such as cheese, breads, and candies for sale along the highways or in the markets.

The Relative Status of Men and Women. Indian and poor Ladino women (as well as children) are often browbeaten and physically mistreated by men. Their only recourse is to return to their parents' home, but frequently are rejected by the parents for various reasons. A woman from a higher-status family is less likely to suffer in this way, especially if her marriage has been arranged by her parents. While walking, a Maya woman traditionally trails her husband; if he falls drunk by the wayside, she dutifully waits to care for him until he wakes up.

MARRIAGE, FAMILY, AND KINSHIP

Marriage. Marriages are sometimes arranged in Maya communities, although most couples choose each other and often elope. Membership in private clubs and attendance at private schools provides a way for middle-class and upper-class young people to meet prospective mates. Parents may disapprove of a selection, but their children are likely able to persuade them. Marriages are celebrated in a civil ceremony that may be followed by a religious rite. Monogamy is the rule, although many men have a mistress as well as a wife. Among the poorer classes, both Mayan and Ladino, unions are free and ties are brittle; many children do not know, nor are they recognized by their fathers. Formal divorces are more common than many people believe, despite the disapproval of the Catholic Church. Until recently, a divorced woman did not have the right to retain her husband's surname; but she may sue for a share of his property to support herself and her minor children.

Domestic Unit. The nuclear family is the preferred and most common domestic unit. Among both Ladinos and Maya, a young couple may live at first in the home of the man's parents, or if that is inconvenient or overcrowded, with the parents of the woman. Wealthy Ladinos often provide elaborate houses close to their own homes as wedding presents for their sons and daughters.

Inheritance. Inheritance depends on a witnessed written or oral testament of the deceased, and since many people die without indicating their preferences, family disputes after death are very common among both

Mayas and Ladinos. Land, houses, and personal belongings may be inherited by either sex, and claims may be contested in the courts and in intrafamily bickering.

SOCIALIZATION

Infant Care. The children of middle-class and upper-class Ladinos are cared for by their mothers, grandmothers, and young women, often from the rural areas, hired as nannies. They tend to be indulged by their caretakers. They may be breastfed for a few months but then are given bottles, which they may continue using until four or five years. To keep children from crying or complaining to their parents, nannies quickly give them whatever they demand.

Maya women in the rural areas depend upon their older children to help care for the younger ones. Babies are breastfed longer, but seldom after two years of age. They are always close to their mothers during this period, sleeping next to them and carried in shawls on their backs wherever they go. They are nursed frequently on demand wherever the mother may be. Little girls of five or six years may be seen carrying tiny babies in the same way in order to help out, but seldom are they out of sight of the mother. This practice may be seen as education for the child as well as caretaking for the infant. Indian children are socialized to take part in all the activities of the family as soon as they are physically and mentally capable.

Child Rearing and Education. Middle-class and upper-class Ladino children, especially in urban areas, are not expected to do any work until they are teenagers or beyond. They may attend a private preschool, sometimes as early as eighteen months, but formal education begins at age seven. Higher education is respected as a means of rising socially and economically. Children are educated to the highest level of which they are capable, depending on the finances of the family.

Higher Education. The national university, San Carlos, has until recently had free tuition, and is still the least expensive. As a result, it is overcrowded, but graduates many students who would not otherwise be able to attain an education. There are six other private universities, several with branches in secondary cities. They grant undergraduate and advanced degrees in the arts, humanities, and sciences, as well as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, law, engineering, and architecture. Postgraduate work is often pursued abroad by the better and more affluent students, especially in the United States, Spain, Mexico, and some other Latin American countries.

Read more: <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guatemala.html#ixzz4zYbkdAzo>

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Support for the Arts. The Ministry of Culture provides moral and some economic support for the arts, but most artists are self-supporting. Arts and handicrafts are important to all sectors of the population; artists are respected and patronized, especially in the cities where there are numerous art galleries. Even some of the smaller towns, such as Tecpán, Comalapa and Santiago de Atitlán offer paintings by local artists for sale to both foreign and Guatemalan visitors. There are dozens, perhaps hundreds, of indigenous "primitive" painters, some of whom are known internationally. Their products form an important part of the wares offered to tourists and local collectors. Non-indigenous painters are exhibited primarily in the capital city; these include many foreign artists as well as Guatemalans.

Graphic Arts. Textiles, especially those woven by women on the indigenous backstrap loom, are of such fine quality as to have been the object of scholarly study. The Ixchel Museum of Indian Textiles, located in Guatemala City at the Francisco Marroquín University, archives, preserves, studies, and displays textiles from all parts of the country.

Pottery ranges from utilitarian to ritual wares and often is associated with specific communities, such as Chinautla and Rabinal, where it has been a local craft for centuries. There are several museums, both government and private, where the most exquisite ancient and modern pieces are displayed.

Read more: <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guatemala.html#ixzz4zYJ3Eh1J>

SPORTS

Football (soccer) is Guatemala's most popular sport. The national team competes internationally, and Guatemalan players figure prominently in clubs in other national leagues, especially those of Mexico and Uruguay.

In 1950 Guatemala hosted the Central American and Caribbean Games, a quadrennial competition organized in 1924 in which Guatemalan athletes have participated since the games were first held in 1926. The country also competes in the quadrennial Pan American Games and participated in its first Olympic Summer Games in 1952 in Helsinki.

Outdoor sports are main recreational activities. The most popular are white-water rafting near Acatenango Volcano, kayaking on inland Lake Atitlán and along the Pacific coast, spelunking in the limestone labyrinths of the Petén plateau, and volcano climbing and mountain biking in the sierras above Antigua Guatemala. Snorkeling, deep-sea fishing, scuba diving, and surfing are also popular recreations among visitors to the Caribbean coast. In larger communities throughout the country, recreational parks draw crowds on weekends.

WWW.BRITANNICA.COM

MUSIC

Performance Arts. Music has been important in Guatemala since colonial times, when the Catholic Church used it to teach Christian doctrine. Both the doctrine and the musical styles were adopted at an early date. The work of Maya who composed European-style classical music in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been revived and is performed by several local performance groups, some using replicas of early instruments. William Orbaugh, a Guatemalan of Swiss ancestry, is known internationally for performances of classical and popular guitar music. Garifuna music, especially that of Caribbean origin, is popular in both Guatemala and in the United States, which has a large expatriate Garifuna population. Other popular music derives from Mexico, Argentina, and especially the United States. The marimba is the popular favorite instrument, in both the city and in the countryside.

There is a national symphony as well as a ballet, national chorus, and an opera company, all of which perform at the National Theater, a large imposing structure built on the site of an ancient fort near the city center.

Theater is less developed, although several private semiprofessional and amateur groups perform in both Spanish and English. The city of Antigua Guatemala is a major center for the arts, along with the cities of Guatemala and Quetzaltenango.

Read more: <http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Guatemala.html#ixzz4zYJ3Eh1>

FOOD

The history of Guatemala is often recognized in three stages: the Mayan Empire, Spanish rule, and the modern republic (which is in existence today). All three have had an influence on Guatemalan cuisine. The ancient Mayan civilization lasted for about six hundred years before collapsing around 900 A.D. These ancient natives lived throughout Central America and grew maize (corn) as their staple crop. In addition, the Maya ate amaranth , a breakfast cereal similar to modern day cereals.

Guatemala remained under Spanish rule from 1524 to 1821. Typical Spanish dishes, such as enchiladas, guacamole, tamales, and tortillas , began making their way into the Guatemalan diet. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, an empanada (meat turnover) could be purchased for about twenty-five cents, chicken tortillas for fifty cents each, and a hot beef sandwich for about seventy-five cents. Other countries and their cultures have also affected the Guatemalan diet, including the Chinese. Most Guatemalan cities and towns have at least one Chinese restaurant.

Guatemala became independent from Spain in 1821, and continues to remain independent. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, banana and coffee plantations were established. Sugarcane became another successful agricultural crop by the end of World War II (1939-1945).

Guatemala does not have a national dish, but there are many foods that have become a part of the everyday diet. Just as during the time of the Mayans, corn continues to be a staple food. It is most often eaten in the form of a tortilla (a thin corn pancake). These are usually served warm and wrapped in cloth. Black beans (frijoles) , another Mayan staple, are eaten at almost every meal. They are usually refried (volteados), mashed, or simply eaten whole (parados). Rice, eggs, and cheese are also widely consumed.

Chicken, turkey, and beef (roasted, grilled, or fried) are the country's most popular meats and are normally accompanied by beans and rice (frijoles con arroz). Meats are often served in stews (caldos) or cooked in a spicy chili sauce, though whole chickens may occasionally be served with the feet still attached. Pepián , a thick meat and vegetable stew, is a common dish in the area of Antigua (a town just outside of Guatemala City, the country's capital). Seafood is most common along the coasts, and is usually prepared with various spices.

Other popular dishes are bistec (grilled or fried beef), guacamole (mashed avocado with onions and spices), mosh (porridge), churrasco (charcoal-grilled steak), and chiles rellenos (chiles stuffed with meat and vegetables). Fresh fruits and vegetables, such as yucca, carrots, plantains, celery, cucumbers, and radishes, help to keep the Guatemalan diet healthy. However, snacks, such as doughnuts (donas), are also widely popular.

Guatemalan coffee, which is most often exported, is considered some of the best in the world. Most Guatemalans, however, tend to drink weak coffee loaded with plenty of sugar. Rich, savory coffee is more commonly found in tourist areas. Aguas, soft drinks, are also abundant. Sweetened fruit juice mixed with either water or milk, called licuado, is a refreshing alternative.

A trip to Guatemala should definitely include taking the time to sample the rich local coffees and their dark flavors. There are seven distinct types of Arabica coffee in Guatemala, distinctive in taste due to their soil, altitude, humidity, and rainfall. Travelers to Guatemala will therefore have no trouble finding a range of exceptional coffee, and may even be able to see a coffee finca or two, as well as mounds of beans drying in the sun and smell their distinct aroma. Other common refreshments include licuados, which are sweetened fruit juice mixed with water or milk, as well as soft drinks.

Picado de Rabano (Radish Salad)

Ingredients

- ½ pound radishes (about 20)
 - 12 fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
 - Salt, to taste
 - ¼ cup of a mix containing ⅔ orange juice and ⅓ lemon juice
- Procedure

Trim the ends and slice the radishes. Combine sliced radishes with mint leaves, salt, and orange and lemon juice mix in a bowl and serve as a salad.
Serves 2 to 4.

Arroz Guatemalteco (Guatemalan-Style Rice)

Ingredients

- 2 cups long grain rice
 - 2 Tablespoons oil
 - 1 cup mixed vegetables (carrots, celery, sweet red peppers, green peas), finely chopped
 - Salt and pepper, to taste
 - 4 cups chicken stock
- Procedure

Heat the oil in a heavy saucepan and add rice. Sauté lightly until the rice has absorbed the oil, being careful not to let it change color. Add the mixed vegetables, salt, pepper, and chicken stock. Bring to a boil, cover, and reduce heat to low. Cool for about 20 minutes until rice is tender and the liquid has been absorbed
Serves 6 to 8.



Frijoles Negros Volteados (Fried Black Bean Paste)

Ingredients

- 2 cups black bean puree (canned refried black beans)
 - 1 Tablespoon oil
- Procedure

Heat oil over moderate heat in a skillet. Add bean puree and mix well with a wooden spoon. Stir until the puree thickens and the liquid evaporates. Continue until mix begins to come away from skillet and can be formed by shaking the skillet to give a sausage shape. Serve warm with tortillas, cheese, sour cream, or bread.
Guacamole
Ingredients

- 1 ripe avocado
 - 1 teaspoon chicken bouillon (or 1 cube chicken bouillon)
 - 1 to 2 cloves garlic, minced
 - Tomatoes and onions, chopped, to taste (optional)
- Procedure

Peel, remove the pit, and thoroughly mash the avocado. Add the bouillon and the minced garlic. Mix well. Add chopped tomatoes and onions, if desired. Serve with tortilla chips.

FOOD FOR RELIGIOUS AND HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

The majority of Guatemalans (approximately 60 percent) are Roman Catholic. The traditional Mayan religion, however, still exists and is widely popular throughout the country. Both religions have holiday and festival celebrations, although there are several special days throughout the year that are observed by everyone. The country is also home to several minority groups.

Christmas and Easter are two of the most widely celebrated holidays in Guatemala. The days before Christmas are filled with parties and various festivities, including decorating homes with manzanillas (small, yellow fruits) and watching fireworks. Tamales and punch are often served on Christmas Eve.

Holy Week, also known as Semana Santa, is celebrated the week before Easter. Guatemalans dress in colorful costumes to celebrate the week of festivities, which includes floats, music, and all types of food. Fish, chickpeas, torrijas (pastries similar to French toast), encurtidos (spicy vegetables with vinegar), and candied fruits are popular foods during this time. Those of Mayan descent often feast on tobic (vegetable, beef, and cabbage soup), kilim (chicken in a seasoned sauce, served with rice and potatoes), joch (a hot drink made of ground corn, barley, cinnamon, and brown sugar), and cooked fresh fruit, such as peaches or pears. Small doughnuts glazed with honey and cinnamon, called bunuelos (boon-WAY-lows), are popular holiday treats.

The first day of November marks All Saints Day, also known as the "Day of the Dead." Rather than a day of mourning, it is a time to celebrate the lives of loved ones that have passed away. To feel close to the dead, families often have a picnic on top of a loved one's grave.

Bunuelos (Fried Fritters)

Ingredients

- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 1 cup water
- ¼ pound butter
- 3 eggs
- Vegetable oil, for deep-frying

Procedure

Stir together the flour, baking powder, and salt.
 Combine the water and butter in a heavy saucepan and bring to a boil.
 Remove from heat, and use a wooden spoon to mix in the flour mixture.
 Mix in the eggs, 1 at a time.
 Heat the oil in a deep skillet over medium to high heat.
 Shape the batter into balls about the size of a golf ball.
 Carefully slip them into the oil.
 Be sure not to crowd the skillet (cook separate batches, if necessary).

Using the wooden spoon, keep moving the bunuelos around so they will puff up and brown evenly.
 When golden brown, remove them to a plate lined with paper towels.
 Top with cinnamon sugar or powdered sugar, or serve with a side of honey.
 Serve warm.
 Makes about 30 bunuelos.

Hot Christmas Punch

Ingredients

- 8 cups apple juice
- 8 cups cranberry juice
- 5 cinnamon sticks, broken
- 5 oranges, sliced ¼-inch thick

Procedure

Place all ingredients into a large, stainless kettle and bring to a boil.
 Reduce heat and simmer 45 minutes to 1 hour.
 Strain and serve hot.
 Serves 8.

MEALTIME CUSTOMS

Guatemalans who live in urban areas generally eat three meals a day. Breakfast most often consists of coffee, eggs, beans, or toast with marmalade. Lunch is traditionally the largest meal. Soup is often served, followed by meat, rice, vegetables, and a simple salad. Fresh fruit or pudding may follow the meal. Dinner, eaten around 7 or 8 P.M., usually includes such foods as sweet bread, beans, artichokes, rice, lamb, or grilled snapper. Fried plantains, flan (caramel custard), or fresh fruit are popular desserts.

A rural diet normally contains more simple ingredients. The day may begin with coffee, black beans, and tortillas. A midmorning snack around 10 A.M. may be atole, a sweet corn drink. Following a traditionally large lunch, another snack, such as coffee and a sweet pastry, is usually enjoyed around 4 P.M. Eggs and vegetables often accompany black beans and tortillas (often made by combining ground cornmeal with lime juice) for dinner. Extremely poor Guatemalans sometimes eat little more than corn, beans, and fruit.

When guests are invited for dinner in a Guatemalan home, it is polite to bring a small gift to the hosts, such as candy or flowers, but most people prefer that the guest simply bring dessert.

Those dining at a restaurant will have several options for international cuisine: Spanish, Mexican, French, Italian, Chinese, Caribbean, and Mediterranean, to name a few. A 10 percent tip is suggested at most restaurants.

As an alternative to traditional food, American fast food chains have established themselves throughout the country. They provide quickly prepared meals and are relatively inexpensive. As of 2001, several of the most popular American chain restaurants existed in Guatemala, in addition to other chains.

POLITICS, ECONOMICS, AND NUTRITION

About 17 percent of the population of Guatemala is classified as undernourished by the World Bank. This means they do not receive adequate nutrition in their diet. Of children under the age of five, about 27 percent are underweight, and more than 50 percent are stunted (short for their age).

It is estimated that the poorest half of the population gets only 60 percent of the minimum daily caloric requirement. Malnutrition, alcoholism, and inadequate housing and sanitation pose serious health problems.

Read more: <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Germany-to-Japan/Guatemala.html#ixzz4zZb58NWi>

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Not only is poverty widespread, there is marked inequality. Essentially, the society is divided into a tiny elite, a fairly small middle class, and a large number of very poor people. While there are traditional elites within most of the ethnic groups and new elites in some groups whose wealth comes from smuggling, the national elite is overwhelmingly Burmese. In recent years income from the narcotics trade has been an important source of wealth for members of the elite. Although some segments of the middle class have prospered from the economic reforms of the late 1980s, most have not done well and remain poor.

POLITICAL LIFE

Guatemala's political structure is a presidential representative democratic republic, in which the President of Guatemala has both positions of head of state and head of government. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the Congress of the Republic.

The Congress of the Republic is the unicameral legislature of the Republic of Guatemala. It comprises 158 deputies, who are elected by direct universal suffrage to serve four-year terms (the number was increased from 113 for the 2003 election). The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. Guatemala's 1985 Constitution provides for a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

The 1993 constitutional reforms included an increase in the number of Supreme Court justices from 9 to 13. The terms of office for president, vice president, and congressional deputies were reduced from five years to four years; for Supreme Court justices from six years to five years, and increased the terms of mayors and city councils from 30 months to four years.

The Constitutional Court is Guatemala's highest court. It is composed of five judges, elected for concurrent five-year terms by Congress, each serving one year as president of the Court: one is elected by Congress, one elected by the Supreme Court of Justice, one is appointed by the President, one is elected by Superior Council of the Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala, and one by the bar association.

The Supreme Court of Justice comprises thirteen members, who serve concurrent five-year terms and elect a president of the Court each year from among their number. The president of the Supreme Court of Justice also supervises trial judges around the country, who are named to five-year terms). The 1999 presidential and legislative elections were considered by international observers to have been free and fair. Participation by women and indigenous voters was higher than in the recent past, although concerns remained regarding the accessibility of polling places in rural areas.

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CULTURE

On a trip to Guatemala you will discover a culture that reflects strong Mayan and Spanish influences, and that continues to be defined as a contrast between poor Mayan villagers in the rural highlands, and the urbanized and relatively wealthy mestizos population (known in Guatemala as ladinos) who occupy the cities and surrounding agricultural plains. With the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores, power was transferred to the foreigners, and their mixed-race descendants, the ladino, became the new powerful families of Guatemala. Unlike in much of the rest of the New World, however, the Europeans did not completely marginalize or supplant the indigenous people, but rather formed an uneasy alliance.

While Spanish became the official language mandated in schools, various Mayan languages never died out, and are still widely-spoken throughout the highlands today. The music of Guatemala comprises several styles and expressions. The Maya had an intense musical practice. Guatemala was also one of the first regions in the New World to be introduced to European music, beginning in 1524. Many composers from the Renaissance, baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary music styles have contributed works of all genres, of very high quality. The marimba is Guatemala's national instrument. The marimba is made of keys or bars (usually made of wood) that produce musical tones when struck with mallets. The keys are arranged as those of a piano, with the accidentals raised vertically and overlapping the natural keys to aid the performer both visually and physically.

Although Spanish is the official language, it is not universally spoken among the indigenous population, nor is it often spoken as a second language. During a Guatemala trip you may hear up to twenty-one distinct Mayan languages are spoken, especially in rural areas. In addition, there are several non-Mayan Amerindian languages, such as the indigenous Xinca, and Garifuna, an Arawakan language spoken on the Caribbean coast.

The Maya peoples are known for their brightly colored yarn-based textiles, which are woven into capes, shirts, blouses, and dresses. Each village has its own distinctive pattern, making it possible to distinguish a person's hometown on sight. Women's clothing consists of a shirt (camisa) and a long skirt (falda).

Roman Catholicism combined with the indigenous Maya religion to form the unique syncretic religion that prevailed throughout the country and continues to do so in the rural regions. The unique religion is reflected in the local saint, Maximón, who is associated with the subterranean force of masculine fertility and prostitution. Always depicted in black, he wears a black hat and sits on a chair, often with a cigar placed in his mouth and a gun in his hand, with offerings of tobacco, alcohol, and Coca-cola at his feet. The locals know him as San Simon of Guatemala. Beginning from negligible roots prior to 1960, however, Protestant Pentecostalism has grown to become the predominant religion of Guatemala City and other urban centers and down to mid-sized towns.

1960 was also the approximate start of the long and brutal Civil War, which pitted the wealthier urban ladinos against the poorer rural Mayans. Both sides engaged in death squad tactics, although by all counts the losses were far greater on the villagers' side as the ladinos controlled the government and the military. The government hit squads were aided by the traditional practice of Mayan villagers wearing distinctive fabrics identifying their home village, allowing the government soldiers to kill suspected anti-government villagers on sight. The civil war forced moderates and the middle class to either take sides or flee the country, further polarizing the country. After 36 years of war and approximately 100,000 deaths, a peace agreement was brokered in 1996 and the country has been gradually healing since that time. Understandably, great animosity still exists between rich and poor, Maya and ladino, although they all identify themselves as Guatemalan.

Guatemala City is home to many of the nation's libraries and museums, including the National Archives, the National Library, and the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, which has an extensive collection of Maya artifacts. There are private museums, such as the Ixchel, which focuses on textiles, and the Popol Vuh, which focuses on Mayan archeology. Both museums are housed inside the Universidad Francisco Marroquín campus. The Guatemala National Prize in Literature is a one-time only award that recognizes an individual writer's body of work. It has been given annually since 1988 by the Ministry of Culture and Sports. Miguel Angel Asturias, won the Literature Nobel Prize in 1967. Among his most famous books is "El Señor Presidente", a novel based on the government of Manuel Estrada Cabrera.

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HOFSTEDE ANALYSIS

The Hofstede analysis for Guatemala is similar to its Latin American neighbors. Uncertainty avoidance ranks highest which indicates a high concern for rules, regulations, controls and issues with career security - typically, a society that does not readily accept change and is risk adverse. Guatemala also has a high power distance ranking which indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within society. Individualism ranks extremely low which signifies a society of a more collectivist nature and strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.

Guatemala is similar to many Latin American countries when analyzing Hofstede's Dimensions:

Guatemala has the highest Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) Hofstede Dimension ranking of all Latin countries at 101, indicating the society's extremely low level of tolerance for uncertainty. In an effort to minimize or reduce this level of uncertainty, strict rules, laws, policies, and regulations are adopted and implemented. The ultimate goal of this population is to control everything in order to eliminate or avoid the unexpected. As a result of this high Uncertainty Avoidance characteristic, the society does not readily accept change and is very risk adverse.

Guatemala also is tied with Panama for the highest Power Distance (PDI) ranking among Latin countries with a 95, compared to an average of 70. This is indicative of a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society. This condition is not necessarily subverted upon the population, but rather accepted by the culture as a whole.

Guatemala has the lowest Individualism (IDV) ranking at 6, compared to other Latin countries (average 21). The score on this Dimension indicates the society is Collectivist as compared to Individualist. This is manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount, and over-rides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.

Of special note is that Guatemala has the largest divergence of Power Distance (PDI) to Individualism (IDV) of any country surveyed in the world, with a difference of 89 (PDI-95 minus IDV-6 = 89). Panama is next with 84 and Malaysia third with 78.

In many of the Latin American countries, including Guatemala, the population is predominantly Catholic (see Religions Graph below). The combination of Catholicism and the cultural dimensions, shown in the Hofstede Graphs above, reinforce a philosophy predicated in the belief that there is an absolute 'Truth'. As Geert Hofstede explains about peoples with a high Uncertainty Avoidance Index, their attitude is, "There can only be one Truth and we have it."

In a country that has over 50% of its population practicing the Catholic religion, we found the primary correlating Hofstede Dimension to be Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI). There were only 2 countries out of 23 that did not follow this correlation, they were Ireland and the Philippines.

Based on our studies and data, the large majority of predominantly Catholic countries (those with Uncertainty Avoidance as their highest ranking Dimension) have a low tolerance for ambiguity. This creates a highly rule-oriented society that institutes laws, rules, regulations, and controls in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty within the population.

Written by Stephen Taylor - the Sigma Two Group ETIQUETTE

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Man greeting Man - Men shake hands warmly when greeting one another and maintain direct eye contact. Friends and close acquaintances will share a hug combined with a few slaps on the back.
- Woman greeting Woman- At a first meeting, women shake hands or give a light touch on the forearm. Friends and close acquaintances generally kiss each other once on the cheek.
- Man greeting Woman- At a first meeting a regular handshake will do. Friends, family and close acquaintances may share a light kiss on the cheek.
- In most urban settings, Guatemalans tend to be most comfortable at an arms lengths from one another. Two and half to three feet is normal. In the country, one to two feet is normal.
- There is a fair amount of touching between women and women during conversations but not as much with men and men and men and women.
- Guatemalans tend to favor direct eye contact over indirect and view it as an important way of showing interest in what the speaker is saying.
- During conversations sustained eye contact is commonplace.
- Guatemalans tend to place more emphasis on people and relationships than to the strict adherence of set schedules in social situations.
- While the bus, train, and plane schedules will be adhered to for the most part, showing up a little late to a party or function is quite common.
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- While the bus, train, and plane schedules will be adhered to for the most part, showing up a little late to a party or function is quite common. Understanding the
- Guatemala has a macho culture and women are treated differently than men. Most women are expected to do all the housework and all the cooking.
- Cat calls are common toward women walking in the streets but the advances usually stop at that.
- It's acceptable for women to dine alone, but going to local bars and clubs and walking alone at night unaccompanied is not advised.
- Guatemalans usually wave good bye by raising their hands with the palm facing in and wave their fingers at themselves.
- To beckon someone, extend an arm and making a scratching motion with your fingers or sweep your whole arm toward your body.
- Putting your thumb in between your middle and index finger while making a fist is an obscene gesture.
- Loud voices in public are looked down upon.
- The legal drinking age is 18, and is not readily enforced.
- Penalties for possession, acquisition, and trafficking of drugs are severe and include lengthy imprisonment in local jails.
- It is considered extremely rude to be excessively drunk in public. Most students know their limits and drink socially, not to get drunk.
- It's acceptable for women to dine alone, but going to local bars and clubs unaccompanied is not advised.
- As in any country, it is highly advisable to practice safe sex and use condoms. has an AIDS rate of 1.1% per 100,000 people.

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CULTURE DO's and DON'Ts

Nonverbal communication, the ways in which we deliver messages beyond the use of words, includes behaviors such as gestures, eye contact, use of distance, facial expressions, and many other actions without actual words that deliver messages that don't easily translate from culture to culture. Research into body language has revealed that most of our language is nonverbal and understanding these nonverbals is essential.

In Guatemala there are two distinct cultures using body language differently: the Ladinos of European descent and the Mayans. Both groups speak Spanish, but their body languages varies greatly.

Communication with Ladino Guatemalans:

Market in Guatemala City

Although it varies depending on gender and whether you're talking with city dwellers or rural residents, Ladino Guatemalans tend to use a lot less personal space and a lot more touching than Americans. A kiss on the cheek between female friends or a hug between males is not uncommon. Firm hand shakes, big gestures, direct eye contact, and showing emotions on one's face or in public displays of affection are the norm. However, raising of the voice is seen as rude or aggressive and should be avoided.

Communication with Mayan Guatemalans:

In many ways, the use of nonverbals in the Mayan community is the complete opposite of those of the Ladinos. When communicating with the Mayans, one can expect more avoidance of eye contact and less touching, although not in a disrespectful sense. Also while Americans are accustomed to a firm handshake, the Mayan handshake is described as limp, more like a light touch. Using a firm handshake here would be uncomfortable and should be avoided. They also do not engage in public displays of affection as readily as the Ladinos. Rather, they're more reserved and conservative in their emotional displays and in communication in general.

Hand Gesture to Avoid in Guatemala: La Mano Caliente

When most people think of nonverbal communication, gesturing immediately comes to mind. While I understand that hand gestures are only a small part of body language, I would be remiss not to include this one.

La Mano Caliente ("the hot hand") looks like this and is considered highly offensive in Guatemala. According to *The Nonverbal Code*, "...anyone using it should be prepared to fight. If a person were to use la mano caliente to a military or police officer, the offender could expect to spend time in jail or do hard labor in the army."

It is interesting that this hand gesture, often called "the fig", actually means good luck in other cultures. It just goes to show the importance of learning appropriate nonverbals beforehand.



LANGUAGE

The number of individual languages listed for Guatemala is 27. Of these, 26 are living and 1 is extinct. Of the living languages, 24 are indigenous and 2 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 10 are institutional, 9 are developing, 5 are in trouble, and 2 are dying.



English	español (Spanish)
Welcome	Bienvenido (sg) Bienvenidos (pl)
Hello (General greeting)	¡Hola!
Hello (on phone)	¡Diga! ¡Dígame! ¿Sí? ¿Bueno? ¡Hola! ¿Aló?
How are you?	¿Cómo está usted? (frm) ¿Cómo estás? (inf) ¿Qué tal? (inf) ¿Qué tal estás? (inf)
Reply to 'How are you?'	Bien gracias, ¿y usted? (frm) Bien gracias, ¿y tú? (inf)
Long time no see	¡Cuánto tiempo! ¡Tanto tiempo sin verte!
What's your name?	¿Cómo te llamas? (inf) ¿Cómo se llama Usted? (frm)
My name is ...	Mi nombre es ... Me llamo ...
Where are you from?	¿De dónde eres? (inf) ¿De dónde es usted? (frm)
I'm from ...	Soy de ...
Pleased to meet you	Mucho gusto Encantado
Good morning (Morning greeting)	Buenos días
Good afternoon (Afternoon greeting)	Buenas tardes
Good evening (Evening greeting)	Buenas tardes Buenas noches
Good night	Buenas noches
Goodbye (Parting phrases)	Adiós Hasta luego Hasta la vista Hasta mañana
Good luck!	¡Buena suerte!
Cheers! Good Health! (Toasts used when drinking)	¡Salud!
Have a nice day	¡Que pase un buen día! ¡Que tengas un buen día! (inf) ¡Que tenga Usted un buen día! (frm)
Bon appetit / Have a nice meal	¡Buen provecho! ¡Buen apetito! ¡Que aproveche!

English	español (Spanish)
Bon voyage / Have a good journey	¡Buen viaje!
I don't know	No sé No lo sé
I understand	Entiendo Comprendo
I don't understand	No entiendo No comprendo
Please speak more slowly	Por favor hable más despacio
Please say that again	¿Me lo puede repetir, por favor? ¿Puede repetirlo, por favor?
Please write it down	¿Puede escribirlo, por favor?
Do you speak English?	¿Habla inglés? (frm) ¿Hablas inglés? (inf) ¿Sabe hablar inglés? (frm) ¿Sabes hablar inglés? (inf)
Do you speak Spanish?	¿Habla usted español? (frm) ¿Hablas español? (inf)
Yes, a little (reply to 'Do you speak ...?')	Sí, hablo un poquito de español Sí, un poco
Speak to me in Spanish	Hábleme en español Puede hablar español conmigo
How do you say ... in Spanish?	¿Cómo se dice ... en español?
Excuse me	¡Perdón! ¡Perdone! ¡Discúlpe!
How much is this?	¿Cuánto cuesta? ¿Cuánto cuesta esto?
Sorry	¡Perdón! ¡Perdone! ¡Lo siento!
Please	Por favor
Thank you	Gracias Muchas gracias
Reply to thank you	De nada No hay de qué
Where's the toilet?	¿Dónde están los aseos ¿Dónde están los sanitarios? ¿Dónde está el baño? ¿Dónde está el cuarto de baño?
This gentleman will pay for everything	Este caballero pagará todo Este caballero pagará por todo
This lady will pay for everything	Esta dama pagará todo Esta dama pagará por todo Esta señorita pagará todo Esta señorita pagará por todo

English	español (Spanish)
Would you like to dance with me?	¿Querría bailar conmigo? (frm) ¿Querrías bailar conmigo? (inf) ¿Quisiera bailar conmigo? (frm) ¿Quisieras bailar conmigo? (inf) ¿Le gustaría bailar conmigo? (frm) ¿Te gustaría bailar conmigo? (inf)
Do you come here often?	¿Vienes aquí a menudo? ¿Vienes mucho por aquí? ¿Vienes aquí seguido? (Mexico)
I miss you	Te echo de menos Te extraño (LatAm)
I love you	Te amo Te quiero
Get well soon	Que te mejores Que te mejores pronto ¡Recupérate pronto! Pronta recuperación Ponte bueno pronto
Leave me alone!	¡Déjeme en paz! ¡Déjeme en paz por favor!
Help!	¡Ayuda! ¡Ayúdame! ¡Socorro! ¡Auxilio!
Fire!	¡Fuego!
Stop!	¡Alto!
Call the police!	¡Llame a la policía!
Christmas and New Year greetings	¡Feliz Navidad y próspero año nuevo! ¡Feliz Navidad y Feliz Año Nuevo!
Easter greetings	¡Felices Pascuas!
Birthday greetings	¡Feliz cumpleaños!
One language is never enough	Un idioma nunca es suficiente Un solo idioma nunca es suficiente
My hovercraft is full of eels Why this phrase?	Mi aerodeslizador está lleno de anguilas

SAFETY

Traveling to a foreign country such as Guatemala can offer the experience of a lifetime. However, in the midst of all this excitement you must also be cognizant of your surroundings and take certain precautions to ensure your safety. Like many of the countries in Africa and around the world, Guatemala has certain neighborhoods you might be wise to avoid, and the country is currently experiencing a higher than average crime rate due to an increase in gang activity in certain regions of the country.

To help you safely enjoy all that Guatemala has to offer, below we have outlined a few travel safety tips you may want to keep in mind while visiting the country.

TRAVEL IN GROUPS

As the old saying goes, “there is safety in numbers.” Truer words have never been spoken. As you make your way through beautiful Guatemala, en route to the various sites and attractions you’ve mapped out on your itinerary, always try to travel with at least one other person (even more if you can). Research shows that criminals are less likely to approach you when they feel outnumbered.

MAKE COPIES OF ALL YOUR IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Documents can easily be misplaced or even stolen in the hustle and bustle of foreign travel, creating a nightmarish situation you just don’t need. This is why you should make copies of all your important papers. This includes copies of your passport, visa, driver’s license, social security card and medical insurance card. Travel experts suggest you keep one copy of these documents on your person at all times, and at least one other copy locked in the hotel safe.

BEWARE OF THE NIGHT

Sightseeing is an activity that should be limited to the daylight hours, as unsavory types tend to be hard at work during the nighttime, often preying on unsuspecting tourists. Enjoy your hotel during the nighttime hours, and if you must go out, try to stay in the immediate area.

WATCH THE STRAYS

Guatemala has many stray dogs and cats roaming the streets, many of which are feral and quite dangerous. Even if the animal looks friendly, resist the temptation to pet him/her, as many of these strays are infected with diseases, including rabies.

GET VACCINATED

Check with your doctor regarding the vaccinations that would be appropriate when traveling to Guatemala and don’t let a serious illness of some type ruin your long-awaited getaway.

FOOD

When buying street food and snacks in more rural areas of Guatemala, take the usual precautions: don’t buy meat unless you can see it being cooked right in front of you. If you find yourself buying snacks out of a bus window, avoid anything with meat in it and try to go for fruit that you can peel.

TRAVELING BY TAXI OR WHEN WALKING

The most common type of theft is “snatch and grab” robbery, and anything that can be quickly grabbed is at risk: cameras, jewelry, purses, backpacks, mobile phones, etc. Exercise caution and keep belongings out of sight if you are sightseeing, walking, or traveling by taxi as passengers in these open-air vehicles have been targeted by thieves. If walking along the street, make yourself less of a target by carrying bags or items in your hand or on the shoulder that is furthest from the street.

CURRENCY



<https://www.travelex.com/currency-converter>

The unit of currency in Guatemala is the quetzal.

The quetzal is theoretically divided into 100 centavos. However, because of their insignificant value, you will rarely see or have to handle centavos. If you do, there are coins in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25, and 50 centavos. There are also 1 quetzal coins, which are quite common and handy.

There are paper notes in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 quetzales. This can be a bit of a problem for travelers, since the bill with the largest denomination is worth only around US\$13 (£6.50). In late 2009, the government is expected to introduce a new 200 quetzales note.

If your ATM card doesn't work and you need cash in a hurry, Western Union (tel. 502/2360-1737 in Guatemala; www.westernunion.com) has numerous offices around Guatemala City and in several major towns and cities around the country. It offers secure and rapid, money-wire and telegram service.

EXCHANGING MONEY

You can change money at all banks in Guatemala. Most charge a very slight service fee. Given the fact that banks handle money exchanges, there are very few exchange houses in Guatemala, although you may run across one here or there. In general, there is little variation in the exchange rate offered at banks and exchange houses.

Hotels will often exchange money as well; there usually isn't much of a line, but they might shave a few centavos off the exchange rate. Warning: Be careful when leaving a bank. Criminals are often looking for foreigners who have just withdrawn or exchanged cash.

Most airport taxis, shuttles, and major hotels will accept dollars upon your arrival, so it's not absolutely essential to exchange money before traveling to Guatemala. There are two banks inside the airport terminal that will exchange dollars and major European currencies, and will cash traveler's checks. They are usually open for all arriving flights. However, if you arrive outside of this bank's hours, or want to avoid any delay at the airport bank or ATMs, you might consider exchanging at least some money -- just enough to cover airport incidentals and transportation to your hotel -- before you leave home (though don't expect the exchange rate to be ideal).

SMALL CHANGE

When you change money, try to get some smaller bills and 1-quetzal coins. Petty cash will come in handy for tipping and public transportation. Even though the largest bill is not very valuable by Western standards, many taxi drivers and small shop owners have trouble making change for a 100 quetzales bill.

ATMS

The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (automated teller machine). Remember that many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank's ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions. In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. For international withdrawal fees, ask your bank.

You can use your credit card to receive cash advances at ATMs. Keep in mind that credit card companies protect themselves from theft by limiting maximum withdrawals outside their home country, so call your credit card company before you leave home. Also remember that you'll pay interest from the moment of your withdrawal, even if you pay your monthly bills on time.

ATMs are fairly common throughout Guatemala, particularly in Guatemala City and Antigua, and at most major tourist destinations around the country. You'll find them at almost all banks and most shopping centers. Still, make sure you have some cash at the start of your trip; never let yourself run totally out of spending money, and definitely stock up on funds before heading to any of the more remote destinations in the country. Outside the more popular destinations, it's still best to think of your ATM card as a backup measure, because machines are not nearly as readily available or dependable as you might be accustomed to, and you might encounter compatibility problems.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are another safe way to carry money. They also provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can also withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, provided you know your PIN. If you don't know yours, call the number on the back of your credit card and ask the bank to send it to you. It usually takes 5 to 7 business days, though some banks will provide the number over the phone if you provide some personal information. Keep in mind that many banks now assess a 1% to 3% "transaction fee" on all charges you incur abroad (whether you're using the local currency or U.S. dollars). But credit cards still may be the smart way to go when you factor in things like exorbitant ATM fees and the higher exchange rates and service fees you'll pay with traveler's checks. All major credit cards are

accepted in Guatemala, although MasterCard and Visa will give you the greatest coverage, while American Express and Diners Club are slightly less widely used and accepted.

Because credit card purchases are dependent upon phone verifications, some hotels and restaurants in more remote destinations do not accept them. Moreover, some add on a 5% to 10% surcharge for credit card payments. Always check in advance if you're heading to a more remote corner of Guatemala.

TIME IN GUATEMALA

CST (Central Standard Time)
UTC/GMT -6 hours
No Daylight Saving Time in 2017

<https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/guatemala/guatemala>

WEATHER IN GUATEMALA

<https://www.timeanddate.com/weather/guatemala/guatemala>

EMBASSY INFORMATION

NOTE: For your safety, this information is also available on the back of your IMR badge.

The Embassy of the United States, Guatemala City, Guatemala

Address: Avenida Reforma 7-01 7-01, Guatemala City

Phone: +502 2326 4000

Hours: M- F: 8:00AM - 5:00PM

S - Su: CLOSED

Telephone: +502 2326 4000

Fax: +502 2326 4654

Website: gt.usembassy.gov

Head of Mission: Mr David Hodge, Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

WEBSITES

The following websites provide information on the country you are visiting. IMR highly recommends and encourages you to view these sites prior to departure. They are frequently updated and are a tremendous resource:

- ❖ Embassy of the United States for Guatemala: gt.usembassy.gov
- ❖ State Department Travel Warnings: <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/guatemala.html>
- ❖ CIA publication: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gt.html>
- ❖ Travel Health online: <https://tripprep.com/destinations/>
- ❖ World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/>
- ❖ Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>
- ❖ CDC Travel Medicine for Guatemala: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guatemala>
- ❖ CNN Weather Report: <http://www.cnn.com/WEATHER>
- ❖ Official Guatemala Tourism Site: <http://www.visitguatemala.com/en>
- ❖ Lonely Planet: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/guatemala>
- ❖ Wikipedia_UGANDA: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/guatemala>

