



## GUATEMALA VILLAGE HEALTH

*Improving Lives One Village at a Time*

An IRS 501(c)3 Non-Profit Charity Registered in Washington State | Federal Tax ID: 27-3002849

# Medical Team Volunteer's Handbook

## Introduction

Welcome and thank you for your generosity and commitment of your time to make this upcoming medical mission a success! By participating in a Team Medical Trip, you will have the opportunity to see our programs firsthand while sharing your experience and training with our Guatemalan Health Team. With your help we will support the villages in the Mayan communities where we work to improve health.

We appreciate every volunteer's sacrifice of personal resources and time to benefit impoverished children, and accomplish the medical mission.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide some guidelines for executing medical team duties. If followed, these guidelines will help the team and organization perform like a well-oiled machine, yielding the greatest humanitarian benefit possible, and a rewarding experience for all. This handbook is a living document, where lessons learned are incorporated for the benefit of future missions. Please provide any suggested changes to [office@gvhealth.org](mailto:office@gvhealth.org).

# Preparation for the Mission

- Come to an Orientation Meeting where you will hear about all the specifics of the trip including costs, dates, accommodations, and activities.

A brief, general summary is included at the end of this document, but does not take the place of attending a meeting.
- Complete the Guatemala Village Health application and other paperwork for the trip. Find this on [www.GVHealth.org](http://www.GVHealth.org) on the **Volunteer** page. If you have any questions contact [office@gvhealth.org](mailto:office@gvhealth.org).
- Provide Itinerary, Contact Information and Evacuation Insurance Numbers to the Volunteer Coordinator, and GVH office

This allows the leader and our organizational partners in Guatemala to arrange transportation and hotels at the destination and ensures appropriate resources will be lined up to receive medical equipment you will be carrying.
- Obtain Vaccines & Prophylaxis

Check with your team leader or family doctor to ensure you get the vaccines recommended by the CDC for the country you are traveling to. Some of these vaccines should be given at least a month in advance of travel to be effective.
- Notification of Personal Tour

Your team leader needs to be aware of any personal tour that is planned either before or after the mission to ensure accommodations are made for transfer of mission medical equipment you will be carrying. We can provide advice and information as well as assistance with transportation to get you started on your journey, but you are responsible for your arrangements during your personal tour.
- Attend Trip Meetings and Packing Parties

Everyone is expected to help with securing supplies/medications and packing for the trip as they are able. We will have monthly planning meetings starting 2-3 months prior to the trip and 2 packing parties, one on each of the two weekends prior to our departure.

It is OK if you miss a meeting, but we are a team, and the more help there is, the faster it goes for everyone, and the less of a burden it is for all. Also, the packing meeting is a critical time to learn of any last minute changes in either the mission or available resources as well as anything else you should be prepared to bring. If you cannot go to the packing meeting, you must

coordinate with the Team Leader (ideally in advance) so you can get any last-minute instructions / plan updates.

Purchase AirFare

**Everyone will be responsible for buying their own airline tickets**, though we will do our best to group people together so that no one travels alone. **Each person will be expected to take two 50 lb bags to check and a carry-on roller bag with their personal belongings**. There will be room in one of the checked bags for shoes, liquids, etc. You will need to pay for one or both bags.

A Packing List is attached with recommendations for what to bring. We are limited on space in the bus that we use to travel in-country so pack lightly. Rates vary by carrier so check in advance; the first checked bag is free on international flights to Guatemala for some carriers, while other carriers might charge \$40 for each bag up to 2.

Accommodations and Meals

We will make all the in-country travel arrangements in terms of hotels, transportation, and food. These will be included in the trip cost which will be quoted as a 10 day and two week set price which is roughly \$200 per day. There will be some optional dinners out, expeditions on rest days, etc which you will have to pay for if you wish to participate. All alcoholic beverages and souvenirs are paid for individually.

Please let your team leader know if you have questions or concerns. Less costly accommodation in Guatemala City may be available, versus staying at Barceló (\$85 per room (2-4 persons) which includes an amazing breakfast buffet (2 per room)). **Please also let your team leader know if you have any dietary restrictions**. The snorkeling trip to Belize is about \$80.

Bring Extra Money

You will be able to get Quetzales from the ATM at the bank in Guatemala City. This will get you the best exchange rate. A bank card with a VISA logo is more likely to be accepted than Mastercard. If there is no logo, it may not work. It is handy to have small USD bills for purchases, tips. You can also get Quetzals from ATMs while we are in transit

The Barceló takes credit cards. Credit union credit cards charge the least fees. **Don't forget to notify your bank card companies of your international travel or they will block your transactions.**

Passport

Verify the expiration date on your passport is valid for at least a few months after the travel date. No visa is required for entry.

Make sure that you have copies of your passport, credit and debit cards. You can also scan and upload or take a picture.

Spanish

Not required but very beneficial. Concentrate on health and medical terminology.

Start Malaria Prophylaxis (1 week before departure)

If you are going the chloroquine route, your first pill is one week before leaving. Eat prior to taking each pill.

# Vaccines + Prophylaxis for Guatemala

## ROUTINE VACCINES

- MMR – You should make sure that you have had at least 2 doses → **THIS IS IMPORTANT!**
- Tetanus – You should update every 10 years; if you have not had a Td in the past 5 years and have never had a TDaP then please consider doing that before we go.
- Polio – You should have completed the 4 dose series.
- Hepatitis A (hepatitis that you get from food) – You should have the 2 vaccine series – first one gives some immunity; second one 6 months later. It's ok if the series is not complete before travel.
- Hepatitis B (hepatitis that you get from blood + body fluids) – You should have 3 vaccine series – one now, then in a month, then in 6 months. It's ok if the series is not complete before travel.

## SPECIFIC VACCINES

- Typhoid (water borne) –
  - Pills** – 4 doses (1 pill every other day). To be completed a week before arrival.  
**OR**  
**Vaccine** – 1 shot 2 weeks before exposure and every 2 years or info at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-typhoid.pdf>
  - Note:** COSTCO has the pills available for \$12 (rumor as of April 2013)

## PROPHYLAXIS

- Malaria (mosquito borne) –
  - Chloroquine** – 500 mg. 1 pill by mouth weekly starting 1 week before and continuing for 4 weeks after travel. **Take on a full stomach.** Total of 6 pills for 1 week trip / 7 for 2 weeks)  
**OR**  
**Doxycycline** – 100mg. 1 pill by mouth daily starting 1-2 days before travel.
  - Insect repellent – 30-50% DEET. The higher strength lasts longer between applications but is no more effective. See below for more on mosquitoes.

The vaccines above can be obtained from a travel clinic or pharmacy; not just your doctor. If you need a prescription for the chloroquine, Jennifer can provide this. Call Jennifer with questions at (206)200-2418.

Note: TravelMD.com is recommended for getting a complete list of your required vaccinations. They provide a travel booklet, all for \$49.

# Packing List

Here is a suggested packing list. Airlines have been pretty strict about size and weight of your carry-on lately, so be careful not to exceed carry-on limits. And remember to observe TSA guidelines on liquids, gels, creams, and sharp objects.

\*\*If you contact RESERVATIONS prior to departure, they *may* make your ticket “nonprofit” and *may* let you check 2 bags for FREE. This does not always work.

<b>General:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Hat</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Insect repellant (30-50% DEET)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Consider flea collars (2) for ankles (sand fleas in Monterrico)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Small towel for showers/swimming</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Money belt/ passport purse</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Fanny pack/daypack</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pocket knife – <b>don't put in carry-on!</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight or headlamp(s)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Rain poncho</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Hand sanitizer/hand wipes – <b>3 oz max in carry on!</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle – you will provided a plastic one in Guatemala.</li></ul> <b>Clothing:</b> <p>Bring quick-dry clothing. It is the tropics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Quick-dry long pants (2)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Long sleeve shirts (2)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Shorts (4)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> T-shirts (4)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Underwear/bras (6)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Socks (4-6)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bathing suit (1)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Skirt + top and/or dress (1-2)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pajamas</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Closed toed walking shoes (1)</b></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sandals (1) - <i>optional</i></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Water Shoes (1)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Towel (Quick-dry is better)</li></ul>	<b>Toiletries:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Toothbrush + toothpaste</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Comb/Brush (+ razor)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Soap</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Shampoo (+ conditioner)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Deodorant</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Tampons</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper (one roll or several small ones to use while on the road)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Books – Spanish, medicine, health assessment, teaching, Pocket Formulary (as needed)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Camera</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Chargers/batteries</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Laptop + charger - <i>optional</i></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Duct tape</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ziploc bags to protect things from moisture + bugs</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Plastic bag for laundry</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Sink drain stopper for laundry + laundry detergent (sheets, powder, liquid)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Personal medications</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Chloroquine or Doxycycline (Malaria Prophylaxis)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Medical/Dental license (if appropriate)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Travel insurance policy number + contact phone numbers in luggage</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Photocopies of passport and cards in luggage + scans on phone</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> 2 Checks for travel expenses + cash while in Guatemala</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> USD small bills</li></ul>
---	---

Electricity is 110V (the same as the US), so no adapters are required.

# Notes on Personal Comforts

- Many of us missed strong, caffeinated coffee. Bring instant coffee if you want. Nescafe is the standard for Guatemalans, believe it or not. We have real coffee when we cook, but it's still good to bring a backup if that is what fuels your day.
- We will find a way to do laundry between the first and second weeks of the trip - usually in Rio Dulce - but also possible at Finca Tatin. There are lines to hang your clothes on.
- Consider purchasing a supply of nuts or other high protein, low-sugar foods for snacking. Many of the snacks that our hosts supply are sugary. We will have a team snack bag, as well.
- Internet connection: Internet connection is good throughout the big cities, if you have an international plan. There will periods of no internet during travel and at some work sites, and can be intermittent in the community center.
- It is quite cheap to text message from Guatemala. If you have AT&T you can buy an international texting plan or you can get the app called WhatsApp. WhatsApp is more reliable than SMS messaging because it will store messages while you are offline, whereas SMS messages may be discarded without your knowledge. If you do have AT&T and you are planning to bring your phone, make sure you find out what you need to do to reduce costs when roaming internationally. T-mobile has free international data & texts.
- A current **POCKET FORMULARY** is also very useful to bring with you. Search for London Tropical School of Medicine.
- It's HOT and HUMID. Wear lightweight, breathable clothing. Practical tip from a team member: the Balance Collection of lightweight women's clothing is carried at a marked discount at Marshalls and Ross. Clothing that will dry overnight is wonderful to have. In February night **temperatures can dip to 60** so bring a few warm items.
- Many of us treat our clothing with permethrin to repel the mosquitoes. One can buy this at REI – Sawyer's is a good brand. It is much less expensive to buy an 8 oz bottle of 10% permethrin from a feed store. Dilute it to 0.5%:
  - 8 oz of the 10% add to 152 oz of water to make a 0.5% solution
  - 4 oz 76 oz
  - 2 oz 38 oz (approximately a quart)

A quart is enough to treat three shirts and three pairs of lightweight pants (like scrubs). You roll them up tightly, put them in a large, heavy duty plastic bag and pour in the permethrin mix. Leave it overnight and it will absorb into the clothing. Hang clothing to drip dry. The effect will last through about 6 washes.

# Arrival

You made it! Several things to help things go smoothly:

**Last Minute Flight Changes**

We will monitor the progress of your scheduled flight, but if you end up on a different flight because of unplanned events such as weather (this is rare), please call us so we know when to expect you and what plane to look for you on. You can either call your team leader or call the office at (206) 237-7577. Voice messages are automatically emailed to the team leader and others. Speak clearly and repeat critical info.

**Navigating Customs in Guatemala**

You are required to fill out a customs entry form. This used to be paper but is now online for all travellers. It is suggested you do this in the US airport while you are waiting for your last connection, while you have internet.

<https://cdn.c.sat.gob.gt/declaDelViajeroGt-web/pages/public/declaracionJuradaDelViajero.html>

Go to the web page above. Answer a zillion questions. We hope you have nothing to declare. Keep it simple. State that you are there as a tourist. Anything you are carrying for us is likely donated, is not for resale, and is of \$1 value. When you are done you are emailed a declaration number with the QR code. **Have this QR code handy to show on your phone when you go through customs** (after retrieving your bags on your way to bag screening)

Next, you will collect your bags. You can reject the helper. You can borrow a cart from a person there for \$3 cash USD. If someone does help you, **\$3** US is enough for your bags.

At the Guatemala City Airport, do not offer to show authorities the list of bag contents unless they ask you directly. Tell them you are coming to help the kids in the villages. Tell them (if they ask) that the medications were given to us and they have no value. If they press it, say the **value is < \$500**. You are allowed to carry \$600 worth of items before they want tax. We have paperwork for exceptions but is a hassle so best to avoid questions if possible.

If there is any kind of problem (there won't be; this only happens when we carry hundreds of pounds of medicines), you can call one of us on the Guatemalan lines in the contacts list (next page) or have them call us.

**Exit Customs in Guatemala**

As you walk out the door, there will be a lot of people behind a fence all hoping to be the one to give you a ride. Stop, be patient, look around, and you will see one of us in the crowd waving frantically to catch your attention. Please wait and get in touch with someone from the contacts list before exiting the airport.

**Contacts: (English Speaking)**

**Jennifer:** (if calling from US) 011-502-4150-4636 or 206-200-2418;  
(if calling from Guatemala just call the last 8 numbers... 4150-4636

**Santiago Melgar** (In Country Coordinator): 011-502-5985-5682 mobile or 011-502-2333-2653 home

**Charlie Morales** (Jennifer's Guatemalan son): 011-502-4220-2187

**US Embassy:** 2354 0000

**Vladimir Melgar:** 011-502-5986-6703 (limited English but understands most of what you say)

## Your First Night

The Barceló is a nice hotel (equivalent to 3 or 4 star US). This is the nicest hotel you will be staying at. Cost is approx \$85 USD split with at least one roommate – includes an amazing Guatemalan breakfast feast (usually \$15 per person). There are ATMs in the lobby that provide either Quetzals or US \$. This is a good time to stock up on some Qs for shopping and incidentals during your trip. All the food at the Barceló is safe to eat. But **always use bottled water** to brush your teeth, etc. There is a nice pool and gym.

Alternate arrangements might be made at Antigua or at the house in Santiago. We will keep you informed of where you will be staying before you leave the US.

## Excursions / Safety

Guatemala can be safe. But like the bad section of any US city, if you aren't careful you can get in trouble. Therefore **you must be accompanied by a guide at all times outside of safe areas.** **You must ask/notify the trip leader first before wandering off on your own.** This is critical because we want to keep everyone safe and do not want an incident to tarnish interest of others for future missions.

## Managing Health

### **Traveler's Diarrhea**

Ciprofloxacin and/or metronidazole and imodium – We will have these in our team medical kit but it is great if you can bring your own supply.

Non-antibiotic preventive methods have also been studied. Bismuth subsalicylate (30 ml or 2 tablets four times daily with meals) can prevent a significant number of cases of TD.

Bismuth subsalicylate can also be used to treat diarrhea although large doses are required. 60 ml (or 4 tablets) should be taken every one-half hour until the diarrhea resolves or eight doses have been taken.

The two major disadvantages of this type of prophylaxis or treatment are the potential for salicylate toxicity (especially in those who take aspirin for any reason, pregnant women, and children) and the need to carry large quantities of bismuth subsalicylate.

Probiotics such as Lactobacillus GG have been shown to decrease the incidence of diarrhea in travelers in randomized trials. The brand, amount and frequency are in question as the products vary (regulated as a food and not a drug).

## Prevent Mosquito Bites

Dengue and Chikungunya ([www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/](http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/)) are present in Guatemala; **the only treatment is PREVENTION!**

Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.

Use an appropriate insect repellent as directed.

Higher percentages of an active ingredient provide longer protection. Use products with the following active ingredients:

**DEET** (Products containing DEET include Off!, Cutter, Sawyer, and Ultrathon) – Higher concentrations need to be applied less often, but are not any more effective so if you have sensitive skin, better to go with the 30% and put it on every couple of hours.

**Picaridin** (also known as KBR 3023, Bayrepel, and icaridin. Products containing picaridin include Cutter Advanced, Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus, and Autan (outside the US))

**Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE) or PMD** (Products containing OLE include Repel and Off! Botanicals)

**IR3535** (Products containing IR3535 include Skin So Soft Bug Guard Plus Expedition and SkinSmart)

## Stay Hydrated!

Clean drinking water will be available everywhere we go as we travel with a few water purifiers. Stay hydrated and let someone from the team know if you are not feeling well. The earlier the better.

# Execution of the Mission

- Please be on time for team departures

“Meet @ 7:30AM in the lobby” means just that. Don’t be the one keeping the bus full of people who did get up on time from leaving. Punctuality will lead to a shorter work day for all.

- Mistakes happen

There will be times when things don’t go as planned (i.e.: someone oversleeps). Please be patient with others. If everyone works together, both mistakes and their impact will be minimized.

- Personal Adventure – Notify your team leader first

Your team leader needs to know the locations of all team members at all times for security purposes. Notify your team leader before you wander off to go shopping. This permits security arrangements or warnings to be made before it is too late. Ensure others are clear when you are expected to return. Have a cell phone, team leader, and embassy phone numbers with you at all times.

## After the Successful Mission

- Please return blue bags within 2 weeks of the end of the mission

Multiple teams are dependent on this equipment, and adequate time is required to check, and repair equipment between missions. Many people invest a lot of effort and travel money for a mission. Don’t tank the next team’s mission because you have not returned the equipment they need.

- Personal tour after the mission – How to return the blue bags

If you are extending your visit for a personal tour, it is your responsibility to ensure the bags make it back to the Group Health Warehouse in Seattle WA within 2 weeks of the end of the mission (regardless of length of your personal tour). If you must have someone else returning earlier carry your blue bags back to Seattle, please do this. You will not be reimbursed the additional baggage fee, but you will be permitted to write it off your taxes.

- Please do give feedback on how the trip was for you. It is important to know what went well and what could be improved.

- Your trip expenses are tax deductible. Keep records for yourself. GVH has a form for you to use for your tax return. **If your employer will match donations, please submit a match!** This activity is humanitarian /tax-deductible and the expense qualifies to be matched.

## Staying in Guatemala After the Mission

Antigua and Atitlan are very popular with tourists right now and can get very crowded at times. Especially during good weather months and festivals. Travel websites have the most up to date information on hotels and prices. Feel free to chat with trip leaders if you have any questions or concerns about staying on in Guatemala.